

Overall response was 238 / 598 (40%). Text comments follow the numerical tabulation.

Soaring Surveys

2013 SSA Pilot Opinion Poll Results

November 6, 2013 6:13 AM

Percentages usually do not add up to 100% because multiple selections can be made on many questions. Also, some questions are not answered by all survey submitters.

Analysis Categories		All
Summary of detailed data representing All respondents.		238
1	Demographics	All
1.1	How many nationals did you fly 2013?	1 29% 2 6% 3 1% 4+ -
1.2	How many regionals and super regionals did you fly in 2013?	1 42% 2 18% 3 7% 4+ 5%
1.3	What classes did you fly in 2013? Check all that apply.	Open 5% 18m 13% 15m 22% Standard 13% SportRegional 39% SportNational-FAI 5% SportNational-Club 6% 1-26 2% LowPerformance 3% Mixed-FAI 12% Other 4%
2	Start	All
2.1	Would you be interested in flying a regional contest with a grand-prix style start? All rules stay the same, but the start time is when the CD opens the gate, not the time of your actual start. This would be available by waiver, and limited to classes with less than, say, 15 pilots, until we verify it's safe.	Yes 52% No 47%
3	Finish	All
3.1	<p>The current rules for finish cylinders specify that for the first 200 feet below the minimum finish height (MFH), the pilot receives a mild penalty of 20 points per 100 feet low. More than 200 feet below MFH, the pilot is scored as if he landed out at the home airport. The intent is to make it transparent to the pilot when he gets no points benefit from continuing a marginal final glide. However, it moves the end of the race for speed points from landing at the airport to crossing a point at MFH-200'.</p> <p>Which philosophy do you favor? When a cylinder finish is used (i.e. task scoring ends at the finish cylinder, with a specified minimum altitude):</p> <p>A: The penalty for crossing the finish cylinder below the finish height should be the same as the penalty for a high start, all the way to the ground.</p> <p>B: The penalty for crossing the finish cylinder below the finish height should be more severe than for a high start, since safety as well as fairness is a concern, but it should remain a linear penalty all</p>	Favor-A 26% Favor-B 45% Favor-C 26%

	the way to the ground. C: Scoring for crossing the finish cylinder below the finish height should be the same as coming up short on a line finish - if you come up short you are scored as a landout (with an allowance for instrument error).	
4	Communications This year, we allowed pilot-to-pilot communication in regional contests. Allowing such communication was the default, but the CD could ban it or restrict it to some classes and not others.	All
4.1	Did you fly in a contest where p-p comms were allowed?	Yes 55% No 43%
4.2	If you flew in such a contest, did you personally utilize P-P comms?	Yes 15% No 54%
4.3	If you flew in such a contest, did P-P communication have a positive, negative or neutral impact on your contest satisfaction?	Positive 13% Negative 16% Neutral 32%
4.4	If you flew in such a contest, was p-p communication a positive, negative or neutral impact on your contest safety?	Positive 16% Negative 11% Neutral 34%
	All pilots: is your recommendation that we (multiple yes answers are OK)	All
4.5	Keep the rule as is and continue to evaluate its operation.	Yes 64% No 24%
4.6	Allow P-P communication in Regional Sports Class only? (This might force "mentoring" rather than "team flying," but it might just put team flyers into sports.)	Yes 34% No 42%
4.7	Tweak the rule so that the default is no, and p-p comm is only allowed if the CD chooses that option and announces it in advance.	Yes 36% No 41%
4.8	Allow pilot-to-pilot communication in nationals.	Yes 39% No 45%
4.9	Discontinue the experiment. Communication is only available by waiver or among guests as before.	Yes 21% No 52%
5	Flarm	All
5.1	Did you use a flarm in a contest?	Yes 62% No 37%
5.2	Did you rent a flarm?	Yes 13% No 82%
5.3	If you used Flarm, did you find it to have a positive, negative or neutral impact on your contest safety?	Positive 52%

		Negative 3% Neutral 18%
	Recommendation to RC	All
5.4	Should organizers be allowed to mandate flarm in Nationals?	Yes 61% No 34%
5.5	Should organizers be allowed to mandate flarm in Regionals?	Yes 48% No 48%
5.6	Should flarm be mandatory at all Nationals?	Yes 47% No 48%
5.7	Should flarm be mandatory at all Regionals?	Yes 26% No 69%
	Your experience	All
5.8	Have you found flarm display gives you a significant competitive benefit? Please check NA if you have not flown a contest with flarm.	Yes 12% No 51% NA 35%
5.9	If so, do you think this enhances or detracts from your enjoyment of contests?	Enhance 17% Detract 10% NoChange 41%
6	Classes A big issue for RC is how to handle the profusion of classes and declining numbers at each one.	All
6.1	Given that you have to choose, do you prefer competing in larger, handicapped classes or smaller classes, either "pure" classes or classes with narrow handicapped ranges?	Larger 56% Smaller+Purer 40%
6.2	Would you be interested in flying in a FAI nationals that mixed adjacent classes or handicap ranges? Such a contest would allow water, would count for 100 ranking points, and the US team may use its results as an input to team selection. This format could merge adjacent FAI classes, allow handicaps for slightly older gliders, or allow an "east/west" nationals when pure classes are on the other side of the country.	Yes 66% No 29%
7	Sports/Club Class This year, we split sports class into two subclasses, one ("Modern") that allowed all gliders but stopped handicapping at 0.94, and the other ("Club") from 0.90 (Ventus 1) and all lower performance gliders. The intent was to allow tasks that did not have to cater to the full spectrum of gliders, to encourage the emerging club class, but to preserve the essence of sports class that all gliders may compete on an even basis.	All
7.1	If you flew in this divided sports class at Mifflin, do you think that dividing the class improved the race, or attracted new entrants?	Better 8% Worse 3% NoDifference 11%
7.2	Should we continue the separation of sports nationals into "Modern" and "Club" or should we revert to a unified sports class?	SeparateClasses 53% UnifiedClasses 25% 100%

7.3	Do you feel it is time for us to start a separate US club class nationals, at a separate time and venue from sports class nationals? All gliders on the US team list would be included. Gliders with either higher or lower handicap would not be allowed to compete. All tasks would be available.	Yes 43% No 36%
7.4	Would you participate in such a contest?	Yes 41% No 40%
8	Tasking Tasking is really a choice of the CD and advisers, not rules. But we can pass along guidance.	All
8.1	Do you feel that overall the tasks at regional contests are i) Too easy, short, just in good weather, not enough landouts ii) Too long, hard, pushing to bad weather, too many landouts iii) About right overall.	TooEasy 22% TooHard 3% AboutRight 70%
8.2	Do you feel that overall the tasks at national contests are i) Too easy, short, just in good weather, not enough landouts ii) Too long, hard, pushing to bad weather, too many landouts iii) About right overall.	TooEasy 15% TooHard 5% AboutRight 53%
	Which of the following task types would you like to see more or less of? Please keep in mind that we can't change the weather. So, for example, asking for more assigned tasks means asking for them in weather conditions that CDs currently call other kinds of tasks, or calling a shorter task than one could do with the flexibility of the other task types.	All
8.3	Assigned Tasks	More 50% Less 8% Same 38%
8.4	Long assigned tasks, with the traditional target of 30% landouts.	More 25% Less 38% Same 33%
8.5	Turn area tasks with 3 or more smallish (15 miles or less) turn areas.	More 47% Less 13% Same 37%
8.6	Turn area tasks with fewer but larger (20-30 miles) turn areas.	More 14% Less 50% Same 32%
8.7	MAT tasks with few assigned turnpoints.	More 11% Less 52% Same 35%
8.8	MAT tasks with many assigned turnpoints, but a few pilot selected points required to finish the task.	More 27% Less 34% Same 35%
8.9	Long-MAT tasks with so many assigned turnpoints that it is unlikely pilots will need to extend the task.	More 37% Less 33% Same 27%

9	Rule Attention Priorities The rules committee would like your opinion on prioritizing issues we need to work on. Rank the importance of each of the following issues on a scale from 1 (vital) to 5 (not important):	All
9.1	Start procedures	1 10% 2 10% 3 26% 4 24% 5 23%
9.2	Finish procedures	1 20% 2 17% 3 28% 4 16% 5 13% 100%
9.3	Tasking guidance	1 17% 2 21% 3 33% 4 16% 5 8%
9.4	Improving / simplifying scoring formulas (e.g. day devaluation, speed versus distance points)	1 20% 2 26% 3 27% 4 12% 5 11%
9.5	Other Rules simplification	1 17% 2 20% 3 30% 4 14% 5 11%
9.6	Moving towards IGC rules/providing a better training ground for worlds	1 26% 2 16% 3 17% 4 14% 5 19%
9.7	Rethinking nationals classes, east/west, handicapped classes, etc.	1 26% 2 25% 3 24% 4 12% 5 7%
9.8	Safety initiatives	1 20% 2 20% 3 33%

		4 14% 5 8%
9.9	Handicaps	1 15% 2 15% 3 41% 4 13% 5 10%
9.10	Rules changes aimed at Increasing participation in contests	1 44% 2 21% 3 17% 4 7% 5 6%
9.11	Other	1 5% 2 2% 3 7% 4 1% 5 10%
9.11c	Please comment if you selected Other (9.11).	12%
10	Transparency The RC wants to assess how effective our various means of communication and efforts at transparency are. In the last year have you looked at the following: (These documents are all available at http://www.ssa.org/ContestRules)	All
10.1	Pilot Opinion Poll Results	Yes 78% No 18%
10.2	Rules committee minutes	Yes 45% No 49%
10.3	Proposed rules changes	Yes 84% No 11%
10.4	Rules	Yes 90% No 6%
10.5	Annual safety report	Yes 63% No 33%
10.6	Safety checklist	Yes 53% No 42%
11	Safety Concerns Please add any safety related concerns or incidents that you observed this season, and you think the Rules committee should know about.	18%
12	Other Comments Please add any additional comments you would like to provide to the Rules Committee.	22%

Return to the [2013 SSA Pilot Opinion Poll survey form](#) to check your input.

Return to main [survey page](#).

If you have problems or questions contact the [survey administrator](#).

Soaring Surveys

2013 SSA Pilot Opinion Poll Results

November 6, 2013 6:03 AM

ALL text responses (no suppression) are listed below. The **View and suppress text responses for question:** selector on the author page may be used to suppress any inappropriate text responses so that offensive language or direct references can be eliminated from a published report. Current suppressed text is presented in red.

Answers to value response questions.

No responsive questions of this type were found.

Answers to short responsive questions.

No responsive questions of this type were found.

Answers to medium responsive questions.

9.11c:

Please comment if you selected Other (9.11).

9.10 sounds easy:)

A couple considerations in competitions this year: 1) It is possible to fly through the finish heading toward another turnpoint in a MAT, leave the start sector and landout, while heading toward the turnpoint, and be considered finished and landout. I inadvertently exposed this situation in Moriarty, and when the issue came up, I reflected my true intent and took only distance points, but it is very easy to use this rule strategically. This poses an unfair advantage to gliders that can go to more turnpoints after completing the assigned portion of the MAT. Since they have greater performance and can make it around, they can bounce back and forth between two turnpoints and go through the finish each time, running out the clock for minimum time, all the while having the security of knowing they will get distance points. At the very least, there needs to be strong task guidance to avoid this issue, or at least for MATs, revert to the landing after 15 minutes rule. 2) This year at CCSC on Day 3, there were two tasks set that had starts going opposite directions. When the task was changed in flight, I was all the way in the back of the start compared to the task chosen. In a 1-26, traversing 10 miles on a weak day is not an easy task. By the time I made it across the start circle, most of the contestants were well out on course. Since it is not possible to start out the back and get credit for it, I think that tasks with starts going opposite directions are inherently unfair to low performing gliders. I would recommend reflecting this in task guidance as well. 3) If there are low performing gliders at a sports contest, I recommend keeping the minimum finish at 750ft AGL, rather than 500ft. At Mifflin, there were several days when I was coming back from the ridge that I was doing a modified base-final landing pattern that if I was at 500ft AGL, going into the wind and sink in a 1-26 would have probably landed me short of the airport! 4) Speaking of starts, why can't we ditch the cylinder and have a semi-circle instead? You don't get the distance credit for starting out the back anyway, so it is a more accurate representation of what one would get credit for. Either that, or give credit for starting out the back. There seems to be little benefit in these days with XCSoar, etc that allow more interesting geometry than in the old volslogger/colibri days.

Club needs to be its own class!!!

Don't know what you mean by "9.3 Tasking Guidance"

Emphasize the restructuring of handicaps based upon not only the glider but the task being assigned to that glider and the conditions affecting it. The current handicap structure is a joke.

Flarm used should be used as a collision avoidance tool only - not as a fish finder. Team flying is not fair to competitors who come to contest without a team mate. Too many classes and too many contests - eliminate multiple contests in a given region.

Handicapping needs to be for ballasted flying and needs to be adjusted for the strength of the day to make this a viable option for combining classes. interesting challenge.

I flew on two contest days, one practice, and one "for real." The rules seemed bewildering. There were few participants. This should change. The game needs to become easier to participate in.

I prefer the FAI classes: standard, 15m, 18m and open.

I think the current book is too complex and scares newbies away. Work on making it easier for new pilots to fly contests (reg. and nat.)

Instead of trying to create more classes we should find ways to encourage younger pilots to participate in contests.

Just because we have a rules committee, you don't need to change any rules!!

Make it clear what the rules are for circling direction at start and finish.

Many rules intended to promote someone's idea of 'safety' have detracted greatly from racing. Safety should rest primarily with PIC responsibility.

Motorgliders need to have a major Handicap or motors disabled, the advantage is huge, end of story, Look at the final 2103 OLC scores to verify this. The High performance ships [duo, -27, ventus 2]are wiping out others in sports class and need much more

radical handicapping. We need to be able to drop a day, this will encourage much more enjoyable contests for the masses and let pilots Go For it more. Right now you bomb out and your contest is finished. Nick Kennedy

Not assigning task just to get a day in disregarding weather

Overall my input would be to have flexible formats to allow more regional participation, but Nationals need combined so they are larger and have more meaning.

Please be careful with safety initiatives: at times in the name of safety we increase little safety and we place big burdens on flying Promoting younger contest pilots in some fashion. We need more involvement of under 40 pilots in contests. "Old geezers" are influencing CD's direction at contests to make sure we all get home for cocktail hour. Time to remind all that the priority is competition, not social hour.

Reducing handicap range for club class for a smaller handicap difference, true club class gliders only

Require Flarms EVERYWHERE for EVERYBODY, especially FBO/training and tow planes.

The OLC camp at Nephi was a huge success and brought many pilots who had never flown at an organized event before. Please consider working with Nephi organizers...me ;) to standardize the format so others might be able to follow and offer the same in other areas. Thanks. Bruno - B4

The rules should be changed to allow the contest committee, ie: contest director and advisors to make appropriate changes to scoring when there is a distinct change to the outcome of the contest. Contestants should not have to protest and be the bad guy when a scoring mistake is noticed.

Transparency in handicap assignment needs immediate work. Why does it have to be a secret? It would seem to me that you have something to hide

Until handicaps are refined, mixing classes is a bad idea. consideration needs to be given to overall wingloading, partial wingloading and empty weight wing loading.

With the computing power at our disposal, I would like to see a handicap based on the entire performance curve of the glider and not a simple multiplier. As an owner of a asw20, my handicap on a good day is fine, on a weak days, a Discus will perform the same but kill me on my handicap. The handicap would be computed on computed based on my polar and my speed between two gps points for the entire flight. The polar of a cirrus could be used as the reference polar. This would make handicapped classes more fair.

With the rental option of flarm we need flarm to be mandatory. Just look at what almost happened with one person not having flarm at Moriarty and that pilot not taking advice from several pilots to rent one. It is unfair and unsafe for all the other pilots that have invested in this wonderful safety device.

low start heights on weak days hurt low performance ships

no way to delete answer in 9.11

Answers to long responsive questions.

11: Safety Concerns

Please add any safety related concerns or incidents that you observed this season, and you think the Rules committee should know about.

(Sorry my original comment was lost; I will try to reconstruct it) I believe the use of a 700 foot AGL finish cylinder base has several unintended consequences that impact safety. First, when finishing at 700 ft AGL, a fairly steep descent with significant use of spoilers is required to arrive at the end of the runway with the proper energy. This type of descent increases the chances of one glider descending onto another glider below. This situation can be especially difficult when a large number of finishers are coming in together and an expedited descent to landing is required. While I overall still support the line finish, a one mile cylinder finish at 500 feet AGL is acceptable. Another unintended consequence of the 700 foot agl cylinder finish occurred this year at Mifflin. When coming off the Jack's Mt. ridge, reaching the finish cylinder at 700 feet agl was often difficult, causing the pilot to divert a significant amount of attention to altitude and final glide management, with proportionately less attention available for scanning for traffic. I personally found this quite disconcerting and unsafe. Please consider allowing the line finish on some days (a high energy line finish results in enough energy for a 6-700 foot agl pattern), and please return to the 500 feet agl cylinder finish otherwise.

2000' standard contest tows are sometimes unsafe at some western sites. If contest committees are trying to discourage finishes below 1000' with high energy, why would you put pilots in a position of limping back to the airport prior to start on a weak or difficult thermal day at a low altitude with low energy????? In your CD guidance, encourage the use of higher contest tows when dictated by conditions. Many CDs are unaware that this is even an option, and still are of the opinion that a low save is part of some sort of contest flying tradition.

A near mid air at Moriarty between one of our youngest and upcoming contest pilots in a pre-start gaggle. Both parties did not have FLARM and at least one if not both now agree that they should have one by next soaring season. My point is... that FLARM should be mandatory at Nationals and at least the larger Super Regionals.

Accident Reports published through SSA are an international embarrassment. You need to quit listening to lawyers and insurance brokers and publish all reports, warts and all, along with what the critics say. Why do I have to go to the Soaring Cafe to get any decent information??

Contest pilots should not be allowed to go off to a separate frequency for tactical discussion; nor should they be allowed to make any calls on the contest frequency except safety calls. The US should not follow Europe's fallacious communication model as it is both unsporting and unsafe. Working Flarm should be mandatory at all levels.

Heard many stories of pilots continuing to push until very low and getting away with it.

I continue to request that rule 11.2.2.4 be amended and the words "and either landed at the contest site" be removed. I believe that a valid finish is obtained by entering the finish cylinder. If a contestant chooses to deviate from the runway due to safety concerns he should still be scored as finishing. I realize that the CD may announce alternate landing sites but I have competed on days when the CD was AWOL during the finish.

I flew with a flarm rental in the Mifflin nationals. The added complexity of the rented FLARM's mounting, wiring, preflight steps, and post-flight steps made the overall experience neutral. I hope FLARM technology becomes simpler so that any safety benefits outweigh the increased cockpit load.

I strongly feel that the bottom of finish cylinder should be at least 1000' ago. No skill is tested by having it lower. Lower finishes only test "daring." They are a holdover from yesteryear when we had worm burner finishes. In conversation with more experienced contest pilots I've found that their argument always come back to something like "Well, that's the way we have always done it." Even though they enjoy the rush, I would think that low finish cylinders are a deterrent to bringing new pilots in to racing. Who could possibly argue that a 500' finish is just as safe as a 1000' finish. It's patently not!

I think at Perry the safety thinking is a bit off base in that the organizers must consider Perry to be a "gliderport" so we can have a lower finish height than at some other venues with mixed traffic. However this is exactly backwards, sometimes it seems like 65+ gliders all want to land in the same 30 minutes. The minimum finish height should be 1000AGL. I have seen and experienced to many close calls.

I was thrilled with PowerFLARM. It very much helped with situational awareness, and gave good advance notice of situations that might have degraded into mid-air. I am convinced that every pilot in a contest should fly with FLARM, and I urge the Rules Committee to make FLARM mandatory in the US.

Job commitments didn't allow me to fly any contests this year but from past years, I have a comment about finishing: I noticed on several occasions that some pilots - mostly of eastern-European origin - clipped the finish cylinder at the required minimum altitude but then continued to blast towards the airport at warp-speed and grass-root altitude only to pull up and then hooking the runway since they arrived so low, regardless of who else is in the pattern. Asked about this type of arrival, I got 'that's how we fly contests at home!' There should be language in the rules that penalize that sort of unsafe behavior.

MAT with no turnpoints is very dangerous, and even with one could be a killer. Rules makers should take this matter in their hands and not point at CD

██████ kids running around loose at the head of the line of running tugs..Super Dangerous. ████████ thermal etiquette. ████████ Having the daily pilot meeting too late and letting it run too long, puts pilots in a rush to get gridded, bad. Let all the local officials speak at night, at Nephi Ut. this year that local official thing went on for ever.....

Minimum altitude for MAX START HEIGHT (10.8.5.1) should be raised to 4000' AGL. The current 3500'AGL results in too much compression.

Most have to do with judgement and there is not much you can do about that. For instance, at the seniors this year I saw two experienced contest pilots use bad judgement after the finish on a marginal day. Both patterns were scary. In the past few years we have had several bad judgement issues resulting in totaled sailplanes and in a couple of cases death. John Godfrey said it best . WE Are not a NASCAR event. It's just a medal and it's not event gold or silver.

No specific concerns or incidents this year.

None

None that were really serious

People entering gaggle dangerously. This needs attention during safety meeting. Pilots not on correct frequency for finishing. Finish cylinder too close to planes entering landing pattern when finish has a two mile radius.

Poor condition of tow planes at many soaring sites. Bad tires, old shimmy dampers, worn tailwheels/springs, inoperative instruments, oil leaks, cracked plexiglas. Over usage of towplanes during contests, with not enough maintenance before and during, leading to possible dangerous tow operations due to immediate needs.

Poor thermal entry technique, forcing pilot centered in a thermal to take evasive action. Poor overtaking technique from a blind spot with inadequate clearance to respond to a pull-up or rapid turn into lift on the part of the glider being overtaken. Poor pilot attitude and openness when approached to discuss either of these issues.

PowerFlarm use should be mandatory for Super Regionals and Nationals if there are more than 15 sailplanes allowed to register. A possible substitution of other collision avoidance hardware should be allowed via a CD/CM waiver.

Slow tows continue to be a problem. We need to require proper briefing for tug pilots; we are not flying 2-33s in contests. Low finish height was used at Bermuda High 18m nationals, in area surrounded by trees and hard-to-spot airfield. After safety suggestion it was raised slightly, still too low for that site. And a close-in landing on a road at Hobbs after blown final glide. Some CDs are not thinking about final glide safety...

Some pilots make LONG final approaches. Takes up space and drags out the pattern.

Start cylinder rules give me severe concerns about safety. In particular the loitering just below start height at high speed in large gaggles and the 2 minute required below a height when descending below maximum start height while looking at watch, altimeter and trying to avoid other gliders which are often wound up in the same thermal. This is highly, highly dangerous and a direct result of the starting rules

Team flying off frequency is a serious safety problem!

Thank you for the letter to ██████ regarding his thermal flying. Long overdue but it finally was written. Hope it solves the problem.

The 200' administrative landout rule may be having an effect that is exactly the opposite of it's original aim. On at least two

occasions I have observed (one from the inside of the pilot's head!) dangerous low themalling attempts in order to avoid a certain administrative landout. The reasoning behind the rule (assuming I understand it correctly) is to 'take points off the table' early enough in a final glide so the pilot has plenty of time to make a safe off-field landing, or to find lift to avoid the penalty. The problem occurs when a pilot can make the field, but can't quite meet the 200' (below min height) barrier. This pilot's motivation to find and work lift increases dramatically as the finish circle boundary is reached, even though at that point the pilot is, by definition, at least 200' below the minimum safe altitude (i.e. on the order of 300' agl in last year's contests). Either the min altitude should be raised (and this is what was recommended in contests last year), or the rule should be scrapped and go back to a punishing-but-not-fatal penalty for low finishes.

The finish should be at 1000 feet AGL with a cylinder of 1 mile or 2 km. This does not alter the fairness of the contest because it is such as the final airport became 1000 feet higher. Entering in the cylinder below 750 feet should be considered as an outlanding and entering in the cylinder below 500 feet should be considered as reckless soaring and a penalty of 200 points should be subtracted from the score. Arriving at 300 feet is highly unsafe. Ensure that pilots do not fly in the clouds using portable IFR devices. I do not know how to enforce this rule but a pilot caught using this device should be banned from competition for several years.

The idea of the use of Flarm is positive. The problem I see is it becomes a major distraction in the start cylinder. Pilots will end up with their head in the cockpit more than out of the cockpit. The second problem is the ability to tag individual Flarm targets. Now you have created "power leach" tool.

The only observations I had related to the launch operations at the one regionals I flew in and I have related them to the contest organizers.

The safety finish circle radius should be at the discretion of the CD and should be as large as possible to make sure that pilots do not enter inside of the storm area. Landing at the finish airport should be prohibited and as soon as the safety circle is entered for a finish the pilot should exit for another airport or fly until the safety circle is called off.

The two contest days I flew seemed to be safe, overall. This is very good.

There were several near mid-air with gliders at regionals and nationals without Flarm. We have the technology and the product to reduce the potential for midairs. This should be mandated at all sanctioned contests. then, it will filter down to the masses. We have been very lucky not to have had more fatalities. The stats are catching up.

This year allowing pilots to communicate caused safety issues. Pilots were not on common frequencies and calls to them were unanswered. I also observed very aggressive thermal flying in a gaggle. People need to understand there is no flying for yourself in a gaggle and turning inside another pilot who follows one in front of him is dangerous, yet some (very few) people take these risks and expose other pilots to these risks. If one does not like the gaggle one is free to leave or put himself in such a position that tight turn is possible. These are basic skills it is time for pilots to use them.

Too many accidents covered up. Why not dedicate a couple pages in Soaring magazine to investigate an accident? At the Seniors contest a tow plane flipped over and sent the bloody towpilot to the hospital in an ambulance. Nothing was mentioned in Soaring magazine about what we can learn for accident prevention. Towplane accident in Chilhowee at the sports class nationals. Again, no light was shined on this accident to help prevent another one just like it. For those that feel it would embarass the pilot who had an accident, they are just contributing to future accidents by not shining light on it. At the seniors contest pilot to pilot communications was allowed. This seperated everyone by having a variety of frequencies. Most all gliders do not have a second radio, so there is no way to monitor the main contest frequency. Another mid-air WILL happen and if that pilot is not on the frequency, it WILL be a contributing factor.

Too many off file landing with good airports nearby. Too many damaged aircraft for no reason.

Too much head in the cockpit soaring.

We proved at Nephi that mandatory PowerFlarm for an event was well-received and with the rental program did not inhibit a single person from attending. Please consider making mandatory PF an organizer's option without needing waiver. Again, we saw multiple people who rented a unit then decide to purchase one after using it for a week.

cluttering up the radio or not on the contest frequency at contests with pilot to pilot communications is a safety issue

drop the finish height landout penalty rule - it is based on the assumption that there really is lift to be had on final glide. Instead, set the finish cylinder radius to encompass landable fields near the airport, have a graduated (to the ground) finish height penalty at the perimeter, (min height based on best I/D to a safe landing at the airport) with a gp fix inside the cylinder as a good finish whether or not you land at the airport. This will stop the push to make it home over unlandable terrain near the airport - which is what you are trying to do but failing, and allows a finish with height penalty instead of the temptation to do something stupid on final glide to avoid landout penalties, which is the real thing pilots are trying to avoid when pushing too hard for home.

there is too much loitering at the top of the start gate because of the 2 minute rule; pilots don't want to get above the gate when it is close to "time to go" (and miss the gaggle) so they speed around. With GPS we can speed-limit the starts (or the whole cylinder) also and shorten the time to be below the top of the gate. It doesn't need to be more than 10 seconds if we have a speed limit in the gate. That way you can come into the gate, get a couple fixes to establish altitude and speed and get out on course.

12: Other Comments

Please add any additional comments you would like to provide to the Rules Committee.

A good step would be to adopt the European handicap system as used in the OLC. The numbers could be inverted if it would make management of the scoring code easier. The European system does not have any outstanding blunders like the handicap for the DG 808

As interest in soaring and particularly soaring contests declines, the Rules Committee needs to reduce the number and the

specifics of rules which might have made sense in previous decades but now only serve to keep people away. The Committee needs to be ahead of the "bell graph" of decline by actively dismembering the fussy, obstructive and unnecessary structure and detail which has burdened soaring pilots and helped lead to general disinterest in contests; which has resulted in an "us" vs. "them" mentality between contest pilots and recreational soaring; which has added to cost, confusion, time, and effort on the part of potential contestants; which if not rectified immediately is virtually too late. Here's a modest proposal to help define such an argument for discussion; If you hold an FAA Private Glider rating or higher, that should be entirely enough credential to be allowed to fly in a soaring contest. Any contest. With no other pilot requirements. Arguing about the tiny specifics of start and finish cylinders, types of tasks, classes and other minutiae is like the old argument of how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. This is lots of silly discussion about things that don't matter to regular people that might want to fly in a contest. The very fact that this inquiry is being sent only to people who already fly contests shows how out of touch the Rules Committee and maybe the SSA in general really are.

As someone who came into the contest scene only 4 years ago (but has flown both regionals and nationals), I would like to remind the RC that only a very slim minority of contest pilots (themselves only a minority of the soaring population) are concerned with Worlds competition & US Team selection. Making contests appealing to more pilots is more important than splitting hairs on US Team selection, or splintering the contest pilots into ever-smaller classes. The focus (especially in Regional contests) should be on streamlining rules, maximizing flying time (so working stiffs get good "bang for the buck" when we take our precious vacation time), enabling/encouraging comms & mentorship, and of course an ever-vigilant attitude towards safety. Thank you!

At contest, the CD must respect the cross-wind components before take-off. Unfortunately, the "lemming factor" is governing. At Reg 9, the crosswind factor was in excess of 25 knots! well over the certified factor of competitive sailplanes. A glider was seriously damaged but the pilot sustained minimal injuries. True, it is PIC decision but the CD should govern.

Canadian pilot - did not fly in US competitions in 2013 but flew in the Nephi Camp hence did not tick question 1.1 - 1.3 My answers regarding FLARM are based on Canadian Nationals, Canadian MayFly and the Nephi Camp where FLARM was mandatory.

Contest Scheduling: I would like to see a requirement of 2 weeks between contests which predominately draw from the same region(s). For example, here in the Pacific Northwest, there are four sites that can be reached in 12 hours (one way) or less. Often, contests at these sites overlap, or are scheduled back to back, which hurts participation. I also want to whine once again about the lack of Standard and Sports Nationals for West coast pilots for three consecutive years. The nearest in that three year time frame requires six days of driving, not practical for working folk.

Don't make Flarm mandatory, get rid of finish height penalty, try simplifying start cylinder rules. If Flarm becomes mandatory I'm out of SSA sanctioned contests. GL

Finish cylinder too close to planes entering landing pattern when finish has a two mile radius.

Great job! Thanks for everyone's efforts.

I am disappointed with soaring and the response to the issues presented at Region 3 this year. The way the rules are set up did not allow the Contest director to take action or make a decision when a mistake was made to allow a flight to be scored that should have been scored as a land out 4miles from the site. The points from that changed the outcome of the winner. The way the rules are setup makes each competitor have to protest. I have grown up in and around this sport, I have always seen this as a "Gentlemen's" sport. I always look for and expect for the right thing to be done. I may look at a competitors flight trace to learn from someone's success, I never thought to look for something to protest.

I am from the old school and would like to see race horse starts from specific altitude and racing we can be with other pilots . Continue to use GPS but only for race results. Lets Race with each other. From a safety standpoint I don't think there were anymore accident from racing side by side then there are now when we have no idea where any one is .

I do not think Power Flrm is reliable enough to make it mandatory.

I don't think pilots should be forced to give safety talks.

I don't want to buy a flarm as it seems too expensive for the limited amount of contests I will fly, requiring more equipment will drive my participation out.

I strongly believe it is time for the rules committee to mandate Flarm usage for national contests. I have been told over and over again that rules are always tried at regional contests, but this model should be reversed for Flarm. Flarm represents a significant financial investment, so only those pilots who are committed to flying in a national contest should be required to install or rent a Flarm unit at first, and mandating Flarm usage at regionals should be delayed until it is more universally adopted at the club level. I have also heard about a reluctance to make a rule that relies on a single vendor, but that's just the way it is. Get over it.

I think the rule allowing a re-start without landing after a finish needs reviewed. Some potential holes in this rule were exposed on the last day at the 13.5 Meter Super Regional. Without a required landing, a creative pilot on a weak day could pass through the finish and out the start while "on course" on a MAT and be able to get speed points even if they subsequently land out. Alternatively, on an under called few turnpoint MAT, a pilot could fly way over time between the assigned and other close in turnpoints, frequently flying through the finish and out the start and then pick the fastest section of the flight that meets minimum time requirements. It also wouldn't hurt to clarify in the rules and especially in guidance to scorers that the Task Claim Form is part of the required documentation for MAT's and without a Task Claim Form the igc file should not be scored.

I think the team flying in regionals is unfair competition and I think the PP com should be stopped.

I would suggest to be careful before introducing new restrictions based on safety concerns. At times new rules, penalties, limitations are created with safety in mind, but they do impose additional burdens on the pilot without improving much safety and even at times introducing new safety problems. It is the pilot behavior that should be influenced, so that good behavior is followed even when nobody is around to see. It may be more effective to reinforce the culture of safety offering advice, recommendations and, especially, information. For example rather than introducing a new rule about a safety item, inform that there is a safety problem and explain why.

I would like to see the Club Class strengthened, but don't think it needs to be via differing times/venues, since attendance is an issue. With electronic scoring, multiple classes could fly simultaneously - even the same nominal task, perhaps assigned task for

Club and TAT for Sports, as one example. I really do not care to use the radio when flying x-c, but if we want a viable National team, then I think we need to at least allow people to compete under the applicable rules.

I'm quite new to contest participation and I think assigning mentors might be helpful.

I've been thinking about "simplicity" of rules, which drives the complexity of a pilot's strategy. I'm in favor of removing MATs altogether because they are so complicated with respect to strategy. In my experience, MAT results are driven largely by luck by whoever solves the puzzle before takeoff, and have relatively little to do with flying. Kill MATs altogether.

In weak conditions or late in the day, the handicap system is unfair. A glider with a L/D at 4000 feet high can fly 32 statute miles and still arrive in the circuit at 1000 feet and have a comfortable final glide. The poor 1-26 with a glide ratio of 14 has no chance to complete the task. The handicap should take into account the glider and the weather conditions. If the 1-26 lands out because lift quit, he should not be penalised compared to a high end glider. Team flying should be encouraged.

Less capable pilots are using FLARM to leach off better pilots pre-start and to start with them. They are also using it to find the better pilots on course and tail them. This should not be part of the game. Use FLARM in competition mode, for collision avoidance, only. Team flying should not be part of Regional and National contests. It is hard enough to get a crew to come with you to a contest. To organize a partner to fly with is too much. I stayed home and didn't go to Perry last year because they were going to have team flying in the 15m class. BB and 5E teamed up and did fantastic job of team flying. Good for them. No fun for everyone else. Glad I stayed home. Select a National champion by seeing who is the best individual pilot. Let that pilot choose a good flying partner. The champion is best able to choose a capable and compatible teammate. Don't throw non-compatible pairs together. That pair can practice team flying outside of normal contests and do well at the Worlds. KS and SM would have been a great 15m team. Had the champion, Karl, been able to choose his teammate they both would have done very well.

Mandate Flarms everywhere. Public Accident Reports

Mandatory flarm should be at organizer option or possibly based on the size of the entry list. No need for it in small Nationals. Big benefit to it at large regional. I preferred the 500 / 1 mile cylinder guidance to 700 / 1 mile.

Mixed FAI classes with full seeding points. Seeding points based on breadth and depth of competitors US team selection based on new seeding points It all needs to work together - not isolated piecemeal fixes

More assigned tasks whenever the weather and the field of contestants allow it. Fewer TAT's, fewer MAT's.

National contests are too long. For many working pilots, the dollar cost and vacation cost makes it prohibitive to participate in Nationals. For those of us that can afford it, Nationals stop being fun after a certain number of days have passed. For me, that number of days is a lot less than 10. The small benefit in the improvement of selecting for the best pilot is miniscule when considering the current cost of doing so. Moreover, when some of the best budding pilots are compelled to stay home, we end up only selecting from among the most well heeled, retired members.

Need to think out-of-the box on how to address more success with team flying in the internationals.

No need for a new rule, but the regs should have a statement requesting that CD's not assign tasks that put pilots on direct head-on courses (unless the task is on a ridge).

None

One problem I see is the lack of real beginner contest opportunities. Even at regionals it is pretty uncommon to see anything other than high performance glass ships piloted by experienced pilots, and tasking almost exclusively caters to that set. Look at how popular the Nephi event was this year. One big reason is the format that allowed contestants to fly in OLC class on any given day, without worrying about losing in the overall standings (only daily winners were selected). That format allowed for participation by a number of club pilots flying trainers, as well as some other lower performance gliders.

Pilots should not be forced to land at the airport after a good finish. Water supply for ballast is not the contest organizers duty. The decision to fly with or without water (except for sports and club class) should only be the pilot's. Majority of our racing pilots are getting old, lets not make our sport old. The wing loading is an important control, just like a rudder. Penalties for low finish should be minimal with the first offense only being a public warning at the briefing. Team fliers should monitor contest frequency at all times. Our handicap numbers are very good, but our weight limits create a paradox. We should adopt IGC weights .For club class it should be gross max listed in glider manual minus the weight of the water in the wings(tail water is OK) We should quit helping pilots with favorable handicaps who decide to fly light.

Please do not make Flarm mandatory at this time. I have enough trouble recruiting new racers; if they find out they have to buy or rent a PowerFlarm, I will never get anyone to try contest flying.

Please include options for East and West Nationals and Combined Class Nationals. It is time to eliminate any class that can not draw at least 10 participants at a Nationals. All contest should now require FLARM.

Questions 8.5, 8.6 Turn Area Tasks: I would rather see fewer turn area tasks and more assigned tasks in general. Of the turn area tasks called, I would like to see fewer of the huge turn areas and more of the smaller turn areas. Questions 8.7-8.9 MAT Tasking: MAT tasks should be stopped entirely, but if that is not possible, then limit it to the long MAT format. Question 6.1: I would like to fly in larger classes with small handicap ranges. Barring that, handicap ranges should be small enough to facilitate assigned tasks or at the absolute minimum, TAT's with small turn area cylinders. Otherwise, we are back to the current sports class and all of its issues.

Re evolving electronic equipment: police the conduct of the competitors not the equipment

Reduce the penalty of over flying restricted airspace to less than actually flying in restricted airspace.

Some of these questions and answers don't cover all possible or more popular answers. Such as the finish cylinder. Ask pilots if they would prefer a line if there is a steering the point for everyone. And with the line there is provision for a rolling finish, but no equivalent with the cylinder. Make that an optional answer to the question. I agree that there are situations that the cylinder is necessary, but it is overused, controversial and over penalized for being low. The newbies that have had the opportunity to try the line, have commented that it's a non event. There are some other vague or difficult to respond to questions in this poll too. Restrict the improper use of the MAT too. We get far too many one or two turn MATs on decent days, If we're looking to choose US Team

members, fly tasks like are flown at the Worlds. P to P communication adds fun to a contest. Consider how to implement it at a Nationals.

Tasking seemed to be somewhat poor at the events I flew. Flying what seemed to be inappropriate tasks that were deemed fair and safe even though most never made it far past the start and there were 3 days completed.

Thank you for all your efforts.

Thanks for all your hard work ! Don't lose the survey results !

Thanks for doing your best to make soaring more fun and challenging to competitors. We need less AAT, less MAT and more AT!!!

The rules seem very complex. I felt like I brought a good glider to the contest, but my 304CZ is really the box the other gliders came in. (ASW-27, ASG-29, etc.) Everybody who can drag a ship out to fly should be able to have a good time and participate. If folks feel jilted, they won't be likely to come back. This is happening, and our sport is dying as a result...

Too many days where the contest could have been atleast a distance day, and the day was cancelled. CD's need to try harder to get in a day. So many contests have cancelled days and then a group of guys go fly the entire task. That's aggravating and makes me not want to fly a contest again with that CD leading the event. If the USA wants to get real, get serious and not be a laughing stock at the world competition level, it's time to just adopt the igc rules for the USA.

Unintended consequence of long MAT: sometimes fast guy has to choose between trying for one last turn on the list with higher chance of landout (day ending) or come home +15 early and take same score as the guy 15-20 minutes slower than him. This is not a good measure of pilot skill.

Using Flarm: I have been using Power Flarm for the past 2 seasons in 2 different sailplanes. I have also flown with Flarm for 4 seasons in New Zealand before Power Flarm was introduced in the US. I was also flying at the Uvalde Nats when there was the fatal midair. At my home soaring site (Williams Soaring Center), we have 95+% Power Flarm use; including the tow planes. It has had it's growing pains... However, since the spring of 2013, it has been completely functional and reliable. I have flown with it at 6 contests over the past 2 seasons and it has helped to avoid a handful of close calls. I cannot say it prevented a midair, but it did help me to be aware of another sailplane close by on a possible collision course which I had not seen. With that said... I would not make it mandatory for any contest because we do not need to do anything that might discourage someone from entering a contest. However, I would let the local contest management decide on a contest by contest basis decide if they want to make it mandatory. Hopefully, Williams Soaring Center will continue their wonderful Flarm Rental program. I would not require Power Flarm systems to run in stealth mode for contests. I cannot imagine how staring at the Power Flarm screen would really help someone to follow someone else. It would be more useful just to look outside to follow someone. The Europeans had tired stealth mode and decided not to use it during contests.

2.1: Grand-prix style start This sounds like fun!! However, we need to approach this idea very carefully. Maybe, limiting it to the FAI classes to ensure we have proficient pilots for this experiment. I'm mainly worried about a midair. I would support the idea of trying this at the regionals with a maximum number of 15 pilots and see how it goes. I would also impose a speed and altitude limit to prevent someone from diving through the line. FAI Sailplane Grand Prix has a start speed and height limit with penalties for breaking both (Section 7.3 Starting: <http://www.sgp.aero/about-sgp-racing/sporting-regulations.aspx>).

4: Communication I have not flown a contest with P-P comms. However, I have talked to a handful of pilots who have been at a couple different contests which allowed it. Everything I have heard support my overall concerns: 1) We need additional frequencies. Putting a 20+ pilot over on 123.5 does not really work. Most people do not know how to communicate in short precise and useful sentences. I believe, you want to keep 123.3 for contest management (opening the gate, finishing, etc...) and tow and ground ops. 2) If you do not have a good partner to communicate with, it's really useless. Also, being assigned to someone at a contest at the last minute is not very helpful or fun. Maybe, at regionals, we should allow P-P comms, but not in a team communication sense, but maybe to allow (newer) pilots to ask questions?

8.8: MAT tasks with many assigned turn points, but a few pilot selected points required to finish the task. I really like this task. If you have enough turn points, it's very similar to an assigned task. It allows everyone to participate at their desired level of fun and challenge. The newer racing pilots get a chance to fly with the fast pilots for a while to see how it's done, but still get home. I think getting home is key for encouragement and minimizing the stress level and preventing a late night retrieve (which can be problem when flying in the west) for newer racing pilots. The new racing pilot will still receive some amount of speed points which means they have completed the task with a sense of accomplishment. The faster pilots can still push it as hard as they like. + + +

10.8.1 Task opening: 10.8.1 Task opening 10.8.1.1 As the last pilot who accepts the designated launch starts the takeoff roll, the CD will announce the time of the class's task opening, which shall be approximately 15 minutes after this launch, and long enough to allow this pilot a fair chance to climb prior to the task opening. --> Comments: Sometime 15 minutes does not allow enough time for a fair chance to climb up if you are the last pilot or part of the last cycle of tows. Some CDs are very good about ensuring the last pilot(s) have had a chance to climb up off tow; others are not. At times 15 minutes is not enough due to the weather cycling, the site's (for example: Logan UT or Montague, CA, or Minden, NV) unique challenges for getting away, and/or the day is just dying. I've had the unique opportunity over the past 3 seasons to get stuck before the gate opened as the last pilot or in the last round of tows. Last season, I was the very last tow during the 18m Nats in Bermuda High on Day 4 and I was stuck at 1,800' AGL when the 10 minute gate opening announcement came. Bummer... I called the CD to make him aware of my situation. He reluctantly held the gate for about 8 minutes. The difficulty of the day was the wind was building with the wind blowing 15 - 20 kts at altitude with a front quickly pushing in thick high clouds with t-storms expected around sunset. At 5 minutes before the gate opening I was down to around 1,500' AGL. I was below tow altitude when the gate opened. BIG bummer... However, I did not give up. I finally got up to a little bit under max gate altitude and started 30+ minutes after the winner of the day and placed 18 out of 24 pilots for the day. Only 8 pilots finished the task. I realize, there is not a perfect solution to the issue of making a fair chance of racing for everyone. However, not all days are the same. Should the gate be held for one pilot with deteriorating weather? 2 pilots? I was not the only one in this situation. I was one of 4 pilots which were all stuck between 1,500 - 2,000' AGL when the gate opened which was 17% of the launch grid on Day 4. In hindsight, I should have called the CD back at 5 minutes before the gate opening to alert him of my situation and the 3 other pilots which were also stuck. My bad... I would guess, the CD would have held the gate a little bit longer to see if the 4 of us got up which have made the day a fairer chance for the last group towed. I would like to suggest the following change to Rule 10.8.1.1: - Change: last pilot to: the last cycle of tows (meaning: if you have 4 towplanes launching the last 4 pilots, the CD talks to them to ensure they have had a fair chance to climb)

We have to start using Heavy Duty dacron ropes, period. Those poly ropes are dangerous, ask me how I have been almost killed

by one at Parowan Ut., with my 18 year old nephew on board. Hire Jeff Campbell [970 209 3497] to build these ropes, period. Here at Telluride Co if you have a rope break early, you die. We have given over 5000+ rides here, often in very strong conditions with ZERO breaks, enough said. I really want to be able to drop a day, it would make for a much more fun contest, to be able to really go for it. Then if you bomb out, so what, your still in the game.

With the current level of reliability of the PowerFlarm system, it makes sense to promote its use, or ADS-B equipment as it becomes cost/power viable for sailplanes. Its still not perfect, and people may have installation problems from time to time, especially with the portable units, but there is probably already a "critical mass" of experienced contest pilots that are available during a contest to help less experienced users get acceptable range from temporary installations.

Within the committee, please discuss the viability of requiring or at least recommending CD's not task TAT's where it's possible to fly less than the minimum required distance for speed points even though all turn areas were reached. Even the most sophisticated glide computers make such in-flight calculations less than straight forward. Anything less than the most sophisticated equipment make such calculation impossible. Setting the task so that the minimum distance is achieved by entering all of the turn areas will reduce in-flight heads down calculations and possibly increase safety as well.

no comments

pertinent to regatta starts in regionals - why not focus on developing the grand prix format as a separate contest event? there is no current ssa activity in developing the grand prix concept, this 'seemingly' abdicated to IGC and largely irrelevant (to the health of US soaring)international style events. several sites have run GP style weekend events for years. they are successful and popular - shorter GP style events fit the modern pilots life situation better overall and could increase interest in competition flying.

the penalty for finishing more than 200 feet below the finish gate is too severe.

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