Updates on the Virginia and Maryland Clubs

Virginia –

Blue Ridge Soaring Society – Blue Ridge Soaring Society in New Castle, VA held the well-loved Region 4 South Contest at New Castle in mid September, with much better results than last year (see below). Their annual meeting will be held February 15 with the election of important board positions for maintenance, education and training. BRSS member, instructor and tow pilot, Chris Zaboji just completed his ATP and has started flying CRJ’s with United Express. The club flies close to Roanoke Class C airspace and is working on installing ADS-B in one of their tow planes.

Merlin Soaring Association - Merlin Soaring Association is now happily flying from their own gliderport, Merlin Aerodrome. Improvements continue at the airport with plans for fuel pumps being the latest addition to the facilities. There has been plenty of flying on nice winter days already as the club has recently purchased a 235 hp Pawnee to bolster their towing capacity (and use up some of that fuel). A new Arcus M, owned by the club president, Eric Lambert has arrived and space has now been cleared for leaving it assembled in the hanger. A new “Merlin” turnpoint database is under development and everyone is looking forward to 2020.

Skyline Soaring Club – Skyline remains strong and have added a Dicsus CS to their fleet and are trying to sell their Grob 103. At the annual meeting in January, many club members were recognized for their work over the past years, 2 new board members were elected (Pete Maynard and Jim Kellett) and the club begins the new year in good financial condition. Skyline suspends flying in mid December and will resume operations in March after the Safety meeting at the end of February.

Shenandoah Valley Soaring -- The club recently purchased a small, private airport for sale in the Rockfish Valley near Waynesboro, VA and is working to finish a new hanger for their fleet. The hanger is cleverly designed to allow fully assembled gliders to be stored easily. Many members are participating in finishing the hanger; their efforts have been documented on the SSA’s website. There are no generally announced plans for SVS to support the Petersburg wave camp this year.

Tidewater Soaring Society – TSS is a strong, active club with about 80 members based near Suffolk in South Eastern Virginia. TSS members operate a number of private ships and very actively participate in the OLC. No major news available for this report.

Maryland

Mid-Atlantic Soaring Association – The 2019 year was an excellent year for MASA in all respects. The flying featured many first solos, successful glider-pilot check-rides, completed badge flights, a fun and safe Region 4N contest and some superb soaring weather. Their new ASK-21’s seem to be stimulating a great deal of activity allowing MASA to make over 2000 glider flights last year. A highlight of the year (worth mentioning again) was the Open House in late August, where dozens of MASA members came together and dedicated their day to hosting the local community at the airport, gave 40 guest glider rides and introduced over 200 people to the joy of soaring. MASA launched a new website in late 2019. The 2020 year got off to a great start with their annual banquet featuring a presentation on the Apollo Project by their very own Dr. William (Bill) Barry, Chief Historian for NASA. Plans for some educational soaring camps were discussed at the regional FIRC held in Washington on January 18 & 19.
Updates on Clubs in the Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York Regions

*Aero Club Albatross* -- Aero Club Albatross in New Jersey hosted its 3rd winter seminar on February 1, 2020. This one featured an experienced group of expert ridge pilots: Karl Striedieck, Richard Kellerman, Erik Mann, Jonathan Leal, Robert Cook, and William Thar speaking on the skills needed to fly the area’s inviting ridges safely. ACS upped their game this year and held the event at the Panther Valley Country Club with lunch and a nice dinner to cap off the day. The seminar was very well attended with about 90 pilots present. Presentations are posted on the web at -- https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1v0G7JriwS099EYi41yyCWxLe5k60pJNG  

Aero Club Albatross is planning a Little Guys meet on two weekends at Grimes Airport a bit west of Blairstown and just off their ridge this summer. See the following link for more information -- http://www.aeroclubalbatross.org/2020-little-guys-meet/

*Brandywine Soaring Association* -- Brandywine operates at New Garden Flying Field (N57) in Toughkenamon, Pennsylvania west of Wilmington, Delaware. They have a new president – Dan O'Donnell. No other winter news.

*Philadelphia Glider Council* - The Philadelphia Glider Council was founded in 1941 and operates from its own 138 acre turf airport, north of the Philadelphia metro area in Hilltown, Pennsylvania. I visited them in November of 2019 to thank them for becoming a SSA chapter again (all members are members of the SSA). Talked with many pilots discussing the SSA and toured their airport, a very large grass field with room to land a fleet of gliders all at the same time. Thanks to the generosity of some of their members, the PCG is purchasing an adjacent piece of property to buffer their operations and provide a site for a new club house.

*Soaring Tigers* – Martin Schneiderman from the Soaring Tigers reports that their sailplanes are now in their regularly scheduled hibernation and maintenance period. They take good care of their SGS 2-33A, SGS 1-26B and SGS 1-34 as can be seen in their new website which is updated regularly (see - www.soaringtigers.org). The website has proven to be very helpful in attracting new members. Accordingly, the club has increased the volume of club CFIG flight instruction and flight reviews over the past year. Like many New Jersey clubs, their operations are shut down when the President Trump visits his Bedminster NJ golf club. I am trying to get Glenn Collins (who spearheaded MASA’s agreement with the Secret Service over Camp David in Maryland) to help them present their case to the government.

*Clubs without much Winter news include* - Atlantic Soaring, Penn State Soaring Club, CloudNiners, the Cumberland Soaring Group, Hawk Valley Soaring, Long Island Soaring Association Philadelphia Glider Council and the Valley Soaring Club. Please see the September, 2019 report for information about these soaring clubs.

Updates on The Fall Region 4S and 4N Contests

*Region 4 South Contest at New Castle (September 15-21, 2019) ---* The ever popular New Castle Contest had 21 entrants again this year. The contest started with a great day on September 16 with thermals to 9000 feet and ended on September 21 with another good soaring day. Both the 18 meter and FAI classes got in 4 good days of racing. Both classes were tightly contested with the top 8 contestants in the 18 meter class finishing within 200 points of each other and the point spread in the top of the FAI class only about 400 points. Hank Nixon won the 18 meter class with Robin Clark and Ken Sorenson taking 2nd and 3rd respectively. In the FAI class, Karl Striedick won with Evan Ludeman and John Good close behind. As usual, the social events topped everything - upholding Region 4S’s reputation as a contest where bringing your glider is kind of optional.
Region 4 North Contest at MASA (October 5-12, 2019) - The MASA contest had 20 entrants this year and did their best to promote the contest experience by using one of their ASK-21’s in the sports class to give members some contest experience with an instructor. Piet Barber from Skyline Soaring and Karl Striedieck did the same using their Duos. The contest started with three days of rain, but ended with 3 days of better, but weak, weather which managed to provide enough lift to give 3 contest days. 18 meter class was won by Erik Mann, with John Seymour and Brad Hays only 200 points behind in 2nd and 3rd place. The Sports class was won by Karl Striedieck (surprise) with Mike Smith and Chip Bearden close behind.

Flight Instructor Revalidation Courses

We held a FIRC in the Washington D.C. area this past January. The sessions were held at the Marsh Mansion in the Heritage Hunt community thanks to the help of Bob Sallada from Skyline Soaring. About 25 CFIG’s attended along with a number of representatives from the FAA. Rich Carlson and Steve Dee presented the material and generated lively discussions from the participants. All participants left the sessions ready for another two years of instruction. Thank you to all of the instructors for their efforts on behalf of soaring and thank you to the SSF and its trustees for providing the course.

Respectfully

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