SSA Region 11 Report for February 2019

Overview

Region 11 soaring in 2018 continued with below average activity, mainly due to the many wildfires producing smoke and reduced visibility across the region.

In no particular order, here are some reports from across the region:

SSA Convention

The 2018 SSA Convention in Reno in March was a huge success. Many people put in a lot of work to make it happen. I want to recognize the dozens of Region 11 members who stepped up as volunteers to keep the operations going.

Pacific Soaring Council (PASCO)

PASCO worked closely with FAA folks on the changes to Class B airspace around SFO. Specifically we negotiated for the preservation of airspace for Mt. Diablo north wind wave operations out of Byron. In November PASCO held a well-attended Awards Banquet. We supported a promo video by Thomas Greenhill and Brent Davidson. See it at: https://youtu.be/IJA9oXqGt8M

Northern California Soaring Association (NCSA)

NCSA member Brent Davidson Reports:

Highlights

- Trained a new CFI-G and tow pilot from our own ranks, John Pericich.
- Several new solos and pilots
- Welcomed a new tow pilot from outside our club
- Flew 3 of our 5 ships flew in the Sierra Nevada mountain sites, Truckee, CA and Air Sailing, Nevada
- New website at norcalsoaring.org
- New student syllabus

Challenges

- How to move students through a club's volunteer instructor setup efficiently. Students have trouble advancing when split between too many instructors. We have created a new syllabus to help this.
- Finances, how do we decide if we need to raise dues and to how much (succeeding in the middle of this right now)
- Student retention from solo to license, making this more efficient

**Central California Soaring Association (CCSA)**

In September 2018, the Central California Soaring Association Inc., a 501(c)(3) corporation based at CA69 in Avenal California, established a Youth XC Scholarship to help transition newly minted pilots from Region 11 and Region 12 into safe and skilled cross country flying enthusiasts.

**Las Vegas Valley Soaring Association (LVVSA)**

LVVSA President **Steve Payne** reports:

2018 has been a challenging year for the Las Vegas Valley Soaring Association. The Club has had its fair share of maintenance challenges...some planned, some not-so-planned... that have frustrated us at times. But we overcame!

We started the first 1.5 months of the year without flying operations because our Tow plane’s engine was being overhauled. Work had started just after Thanksgiving the previous year with operations resuming on 10 Feb of 2018. Although members were proactively involved with the details and management of having the engine and propeller pulled, sent to multiple locations, returned, mounted, connected, and finally running again, such a maintenance action just takes time. Shortly after getting the Tow plane airborne, we lost a couple of weekends again because of the failure of a rebuilt left magneto. Then in late December, the left magneto again presented us with the loss of a few weekends of soaring.....but thankfully due to the diligence of our volunteer maintenance guru’s we are operational again. Also our Grob 103 started the year grounded with aileron and canopy repairs. It returned to service on 24 March and served us well until the front canopy blew open on the ground due to a storm at the end of August damaging the hinges. The hinge repair was not complete until the end of the year reducing the Grob’s availability another 4 months for 2018.

Despite our maintenance challenges this year, we did fly and we did have fun. Our membership dropped from 58 to 54 by the end of the year but we added 2 new certified soaring pilots to our member rolls and soloed 2 new students in 2018. Our 3 staff instructors were hard at work and generated most of the Club’s 550 sorties for the year. One notable Saturday in September yielded a swarm of Schweizer’s as a 1-26, 2-32 and 2-33 all thermalled in the same thermal. That’s especially notable because 2 of the aircraft were piloted by students! Nice going!

As far as events and activities, the LVVSA had a busy year. In April, we conducted a successful weekend of dry lake bed operations featuring auto tows as well as aero tows. Our attempt to have a second dry lake bed weekend in October was cancelled due to winds, but the weekend was still useful for the Club
as members used the weathered-out weekend to re-fresh our clubhouse which was in dire need of some TLC. Members turned out to re-roof, re-place wooden end caps and trim, scrub old paint, apply new paint, clean, weed and perform essential yard work around the Club house. It was a very successful re-fresh of our Club-house which will be good for another decade!

Our annual Summer safari to Tonopah in mid-July was successful, but did encounter a few days of overdeveloped CB’s. We also had a couple of incidents with surface wind gusts damaging an elevator on a SGS 1-26 and a more serious land out incident totaling a glider and injuring a member. Fortunately, the members injuries were not life threatening. The member has subsequently fully recovered and with the aid of insurance, is ready to soar again in 2019.

Lastly and most notable, our club experienced its 30th anniversary on 5 May. To celebrate, we held a BBQ at our Jean, NV Club house and invited all present and past members. We had a great turnout and the soaring lasted until sundown as past and present members soared and many guests were treated to soaring for the first time. In between sorties, the BBQ, pie and ice cream were a hit! Also one of our Club members produced a video of our Club history which ran on repeat all day in an air conditioned RV. Everyone had plenty to see and do and eat on our 30th birthday! A huge debt of gratitude and thanks go to our founding and enduring members who have contributed thousands of hours of uncompensated effort over the past 30 years. Without their investment and sacrifice, the Club would not have lasted this long. Congratulations Las Vegas Valley Soaring Association!.....here’s to 2019 and 30 more years!

**Williams Soaring Center**

**Ben Mayes** from WSC reports:

Our 2018 flight operations were seriously impacted by the smoke from the multitude of California wild fires and TFR’s in our area. When we were able to fly, we scheduled one full time CFIG and one part time, 2 days a week, CFIG and several guest veterans CFIG’s throughout the year. We operate Thursday through Monday closed Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Even with the lost days due to smoke and TFR’s we still managed to make 2734 glider flights from WSC (multiply that number by 4 to reflect tow plane and glider launch/landings we had 10,936 operations at WSC)

Here is a breakdown of the operations.

- 1227 Dual
- 876 Solo
- 349 Private
- 9 Retrieves
- 185 Rides
- 88 Checkrides/BFR's
Glider flight time totaled 1947 hours and 50 minutes

We flew 224 days, closed 103, and shut down due to weather/smoke 38 days that we would have been open.

Vacaville Aero Services, Inc. has done 136,155 flights since 1983 at three different locations, Lagoon Valley, Vaca-Dixon, and Williams. That is over half a million operations. With Schleicher’s announcement of the AS-33 and the ASK-21B this past summer we have been busy in the office answering questions and placing orders for all of the Schleicher Product line. We continue to grow our spare parts inventory and do our best to support all Schleicher owners here in the USA.

We took advantage of the flight operations being shut down due to smoke and used this time to breathe some new life into ClearNav. We have accomplished software and hardware updates as well as working on branching out and marketing a little bit more. We have a new user-friendly website under construction and are working on the next generation of the ClearNav product line.

There have been some changes in the repair shop as well. Schaefer Aviation is now operating in our shop taking on most of the composite repair and refinish work. Owner Danny Schaefer has brought on 3 new technicians this year for a total of six full time people working in the shop. They have been putting out quality paint work and repairs and are scheduled out several months typically. Here is a link to their website. [https://www.schaeferaviation.com](https://www.schaeferaviation.com)

**Air Sailing**

**Bernald Smith** from Air Sailing reports:

AirSailing 500+ acres north of Reno, NV. 1-10,000 N/S runway and 3 ~4000’ NE/SW runways, all up to 500’ wide unpaved but w/20’x2000’ paved portions on N/S and one SW runway.

The season was yet again severely constrained by wildfires, losing several weeks of soaring due to smoke and TFRs from the local fire as well as smoke plumes from more distant fires.

Tows 1078 by 12 tow pilots w/2 Pawnee towplanes, w/extensive ongoing maintenance/overhaul required. Improvement campaign goal $150K, pledged/raised 2/3. Projects $175K Membership 3 more (174) than 20 years ago. Extensive/expensive restorations of site and roads from winter flooding damage. More than doubled number of tiedowns and trailer parking facilities. Organized activity: x/c camp, thermaling camp, sports class contest, CFIG clinic

We hope to have a great soaring season and an excellent safety record this year in Region 11.

Jay