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

Board of Director’s Report  
February, 2020, Little Rock, AR

Overview

The primary topics of concern during this period have been airspace issues, including MOAs in Vermont and California and mandatory ADS-B in rule airspace.

This report includes previously reported topics of continuing interest and updates to some of them.

Committee Structure

Committee Chair: Stephen Northcraft  
Airspace: Cindy Brickner  
Pilot Certification: Rich Carlson (SSF Trustee)  
Airport Utilization: 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

Ramp Checks and Program Letters

It is the time of the year to remind members that if they have a glider that is licensed in the “Experimental – Racing & Exhibition” category, they may be required to file an annual Program Letter. Anyone with a glider licensed in this category should consult the Limitations document accompanying their aircraft certification paperwork for addition information.

I’ll also note that the February issue of Soaring has an article on this issue, but it has an inaccuracy. The Program Letter should have the information required by your aircraft Operating Limitations document (per Order 8130, Appendix D), not what your local FSDO might request.

FAR 91.225 (ADS-B) has taken effect

FAR 91.225 (ADS-B) became mandatory on January 1, 2020. If you flew in airspace prior to this date where you needed a transponder, you now also need ADS-B out. If you flew in airspace prior to that date that did not require you to have a transponder, you do not need ADS-B out. FAR 91.225 (ADS-B) mirrors 91.215 (transponders); there are no definition inconsistencies concerning the airspace or the aircraft requiring the respective equipment.

Local airspace agreements between various SSA clubs/chapters and the FAA may need to be reviewed and possibly updated to reflect 91.225.
Docket Number FAA–2019–0562

The FAA published Docket FAA-2019-0562 exempting certain government aircraft from having their transponders or ADS-B turned on. Pilots flying with FLARM or some other form of PCAS in areas frequented by military aircraft need to be aware of this.

Walker MOA NPRM

SSA responded (attached) to an NPRM (attached) for a MOA in the Bridgeport, CA area. The proposal listed intermittent usage of ~40 days/year for the high altitude area and ~100 days/year for the low altitude area. SSA offered several proposals to mitigate potential conflicts with gliders. USMC uses these areas currently, the NPRM is to formalize the areas as MOAs.

During telecon update last month FAA indicated that the USMC is very aware of the Nationals at Minden in June, 2020 and the potential for conflict.

Chugs T-MOA in Vermont

SSA responded to a request regarding a T-MOA (attached) proposed in an area that would conflict with a sanctioned Region 1 event. SSA coordinated with AOPA and the conflict was resolved with the military scaling back their operational dates.

NTSB investigating a pair of fatal commercial glider accidents

As discussed in the February, 2019 BOD meeting, the SSA office referred a request for information from the NTSB regarding (commercial) glider operations which the SSA & SSF responded to.

The NTSB’s final reports on the fatal commercial glider accidents in Driggs, ID and Stowe, VT have not been published as of this report (Feb. 20).

Airport Access issues at St. Mary’s, MD and Ephrata, WA

The SSA responded to a request to support an effort to establish a new glider operation at St. Mary’s (2W6) in Leonardtown, MD. The effort was being met with resistance by the local airport authority.

The SSA attended a meeting between the airport, the FAA Regional ADO, and the Seattle Glider Council to discuss the Ephrata, WA (KEPH) Master Plan. It was pointed out that several of the FAA’s requirements for updating the Master Plan violated their own guidance as spelled out in Appendix R of 5190.6B. Among the concerns was a mandated dramatic reduction in the paved areas (the ramp, which is used as a glider staging/landing area) to prevent “runway incursions”. Currently awaiting developments.
FAR 61.23(b) update – which pilots need medicals

The FAA is contemplating updating the language of FAR 61.23(b) which exempts glider pilots from having an FAA medical. The update is in response to the balloon fatality in Texas. The SSA/SSF will be watching for any NPRM on this topic and will respond as necessary in the interests of our membership.

There has been no further information on this subject since it was first reported.

3rd Class Medical Update

BasicMED, the FAA’s 3rd Class Medical Reform program became effective May 1, 2017. The FAA informally responded to an inquiry regarding private rated towpilots certifying under BasicMED. The response indicates that “tow pilots may operate under the Basic Med Rule (Part 68) and there is no change for Private Pilots operating as they have in the past.” I want to remind the Board that this is a topic in which asking for an official response (from FAA legal) has no upside until an enforcement action is threatened. Any member facing enforcement action should reference this response as a “good faith” attempt to understand and meet the regulatory medical requirements for towpilots.

L-13 Blanik AMOC approved

Several Blanik L-13s have been modified in Europe and have recently been returned to service in the US. Additional information is available from the manufacturer’s representative in the US.

Aircraft Certification – IS28B2 Lark Life Limit

The FAA issued a memo of clarification regarding the Life Limit of the IS-28B2 Lark (2-place). The summary is that the FAA encourages but does not mandate compliance with the factory recommended 30 year Life Limit. The memo is available on the SSA website.

Foreign pilots – license issues

This happens occasionally. Certificates issued under part 61.75 are only valid while the foreign license is valid. If the foreign license becomes invalid the US certificate is also invalid. This typically happens if the foreign certificate is only valid if the pilot has a current medical. Without proof that the foreign license is valid, the US license is invalid.

The best solution for foreign pilots resident in the US is to get a US pilot certificate issued on the basis of a practical test. You do not need to be a US citizen to get a US pilot license.

Dataplate

The Data Plate exemption made permanent by the FAA in April, 2010 is still permanent. [http://www.ssa.org/myhome.asp?mbr=8671991229&show=blog&id=2062](http://www.ssa.org/myhome.asp?mbr=8671991229&show=blog&id=2062)