

NEWS • ACTION



WINTER 2008

• NEWSLETTER ISSUE 3

RAF earns Wolf grant

After completing a comprehensive Public Land Managers Guide, and its companion Advocate's Guide for Aviators, application was made to the Wolf Aviation Fund to implement the documents' timely publication. RAF is pleased to announce the receipt of \$2500 toward accomplishing this important task and its distribution to appropriate personnel.

**You are invited
to attend the annual
Recreational
Aviation Foundation
board meeting March 4
(prior to the
Montana Aeronautics
Aviation Conference)
in Billings
March 5-7, 2009)**

RAF Informational Video complete!

A ten-minute informational video has been completed by Video Producer Jim Clark of Dejavue Video Services of Santa Cruz, CA. In it, spokesman-President John McKenna explains the genesis of the Recreational Aviation Foundation, its mission, vision and an overview of its benefit to the public; and an invitation to get involved. (See pg 6)

To get your free copy, go to:
www.recreationalaviationfoundation.org

In cooperation with USFS—

New public recreational airstrip approved

"This is without a doubt one of the most important and exciting projects the RAF has spearheaded so far. We have put lots of effort forth and we look forward to working with Montana Pilots Association to see this successful project through," said RAF president John McKenna about the creation of Russian Flat airstrip in the Lewis and Clark National Forest of Montana. RAF Director Dan Prill added, "this is significant because it is the first public airstrip on Forest Service lands east of the Rocky Mountain Front."

Following the requisite EIS and public planning input, "we have all the hurdles cleared to put the runway where we wanted it," said Prill, who has put literally thousands of miles and many long days into the project over the past four years, overcoming surprises and stalls in the project. In order to maintain the historic integrity of the site, the Montana State Historic Preservation Office required that the original homestead foundation stones stay on site at Russian Flat.

Ideal for recreational purposes, the 4,000 foot long airstrip is adjacent to a tree-sheltered established campground with picnic tables, a vault toilet and is within walking distance from the south fork of the Judith River.

Century Paving of Lewistown has volunteered to provide



**Airstrip is slated to be open
fall of 2010 to allow for es-
tablishment of grass. Do not
plan to use this airstrip until
then for safety reasons.**

environmentally-sensitive ground preparation, and volunteers from Montana Pilots Assoc., Central Montana Hangar will assist beginning in spring of '09 to seed the grounds and get the windsock(s) and parking areas put in and fenced by summer.

Dan wishes to publicly thank Ron Wiseman, Judith District Ranger, and Kelly Keim, Judith District Archeological Tech. for helping navigate the required stages involving public lands use.

Why "Russian Flat"? The original homesteaders were Finnish brothers named Kivinen. Locals mistook them for "Russians", hence the moniker for the lovely meadow in the foothills of the Little Belt mountains.

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All Directors and officers such as webmaster, newsletter editor and liaisons serve on a volunteer basis with no compensation. The Recreational Aviation Foundation is a charitable, non-profit organization with 501(c)(3) status. Federal EIN 42-1613294; Montana State ID D-128852.

As a 501(c)(3) foundation, donors may deduct contributions made to the foundation as provided in section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code. Bequests, legacies, devises, transfers and gifts are deductible for federal estate and gift tax purposes. The Recreational Aviation Foundation is registered with GuideStar.org as a nonprofit organization. *Photo on newsletter flag courtesy of Mike Sidders.*



**Please Update Your Email Address—
If you did not receive the recent Thanksgiving
greeting email from the RAF Board of Directors,
please send your current email address to:
raf@linctel.net
so that we may update our database.**

The Ever-Present List



RAF President McKenna

We make all kinds of lists. Gift lists, shopping lists, packing lists. Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman create their unique list of things they want to do before they “kick the bucket” in their recent movie the “Bucket List”.

Our RAF List does not require such a momentous event and has about it a strong element of hope and fulfillment and clearly we remain motivated and enthusiastic as we check items off.

Early this year your organization put together a very comprehensive presentation for a face-to-face meeting at the US Forest Service headquarters in Washington, D.C. The purpose in meeting with cabinet-level USFS personnel was to emphasize that the recreational flyer, especially those going to the backcountry, are legitimate users, and should have a place at the table when public access policy is created and revised. Getting to know the people at the top of these agencies is just one of the items on the RAF List. Additionally, we have met on multiple occasions with members of the US Congress to tell our story. We believe they are listening.

This writing does not provide space for everything we have checked off our List, but it does allow me to tell you how interesting our work is, how far we have come, and yes, how much more there is to do. RAF's 100%-volunteer cadre representing you are folks as talented and dedicated as any I have encountered in my professional life.

That is where you come in. We are a small group and we could use your help. We have been effective in telling our story, and we are proud of the work we have done, but we want to tell it to more people in more places and we would like you to help us do that. It's as easy as getting just one or two of your flying friends to join in. Or you can make larger groups aware of what we are doing. As time and resources allow, we will do all we can to be in front of appropriate groups to assist you in telling the RAF story. We need you to get in touch with your elected officials, and make them aware of the RAF; that we work cooperatively rather than being an antagonistic organization. Adding a few more qualified folks to our ranks would be a big checkmark on our List. So just step up, give a call, and get involved in one of the best aviation organizations going.

This newsletter should show you that we have been hard at work both on the ground and in the conference room to preserve the flying

Continued, pg 3

To save printing and distribution costs for future issues of RAF Newsletters, we welcome your request for email-only notification of future newsletter availability on the RAF website.

Contact raf@linctel.net

opportunities that we all love for the future. You can be very proud of these accomplishments, and the quality and dedication of the people that you have working for you on recreational aviation issues.

You see, we are not a group that spends much time thinking about all that is wrong with the world, but rather what we can do with what we have to make our little part better.

So, come join us, have some fun and help us check a few things off the list.

– John McKenna, President RAF

Major outreach in progress

The board voted in March to mail an appeal to a target group of likely recreational pilots to get involved and support the on-going tasks of the Recreational Aviation Foundation.

Funds Development specialist Gary Burnett conducted the mailing recently and as of this newsletter, results have already come in. Membership is growing, and new folks have responded to the request for volunteer help on upcoming RAF efforts. We appreciate it and look forward to your help.

RAF State Liaison Profile – Tim Clifford, Florida

Tim grew up in Ohio farm country near Dayton where the Wright Brothers had their famous bicycle shop. You were expected to learn to fly an airplane before you drove a car. The family believes that Tim's granddad bought bicycles from the Wright brothers.

Tim's first job as a paperboy took him near the airport, where he'd spend his spare time, eventually buying a Piper Warrior and getting his private license at age 25. He took a 20-year break in flying to build his banking business and raise kids.

Although his profession is banking, Tim's avocation is buying aircraft, improving and reselling them. Tim owned one of his all-time favorites, a straight-tail Lance before buying the Aviat Husky in 2004.

His parents were in Florida; so after the sale of his bank, a big blizzard in Ohio made it an easy choice to move to the sunshine state.

Tim's daughter, whose A&P husband keeps the Husky in tip-top-shape, just got her private license.

"After I bought a Husky, I wanted to head to the mountains. I wanted to do it right so I took training from Lori Mac-Nichols and got the disease so bad, I had no idea!" Tim added that he especially enjoys the challenge of "mixing the machine and your capabilities, learning stabilized approaches and managing your power is so fulfilling." He spent a week flying Idaho and met Husky owners Jerry Cain and Paul Collins at Root Ranch, who introduced him to the RAF.



Stene Aviation of Polson, MT is cooperating in outreach by including RAF literature in each of its outgoing products. Stene is the manufacturer of the Sportsman STOL and has been manufacturing Cessna fairing products since 1992. Additionally, the Stene family has been highly supportive of RAF efforts and has offered to participate in an upcoming RAF fundraising raffle by donating all parts for a new STOL kit.
www.steneaviation.com

Mountain Wave Aviation specializes in net and pocket products to organize your aircraft's cabin. They support the RAF and include literature in each shipment. <http://mountainwaveaviation.com>

Regal Aviation Insurance backs the RAF and includes its literature in each correspondence as a courtesy. Located in Coeur d'Alene, ID. Insuring aircraft since 1986; now in 13 western states
877-676-1229



Tim Clifford, his grandkids and Husky

"There are wonderful destinations that really provide great recreational opportunities for pilots"

"Although the RAF is well-focused on protecting the mountain strips; I feel I can expand its view to include some of the unique properties in the Southeast. There are wonderful destinations that really provide great recreational opportunities for pilots. There are strips that connect you to the St. Johns River, some of the most beautiful

natural waterways in the country." Tim went on to describe Florida's coastal islands, where airstrips provide access to beautiful lowlands and isolated beaches. "Of all the groups I work with, the RAF is the best," Tim concluded.

State reports

California

– *Jim Clark*

The Death Valley agreement is now in hand. The five-year renewable agreement allows the RAF to perform maintenance on all three of the Park's airstrips. On the Chicken Strip, which is dirt, the RAF can perform all of the maintenance required to keep the strip in safe and stable condition. The other two strips, Furnace Creek and Stovepipe Wells are paved strips and the RAF will perform light maintenance such as weed removal and tie-down maintenance.



photo from the Jim Clark video

This marks the first such agreement between the National Park Service and a pilots organization, a major step towards ensuring access to the Park by airplane.

Florida

– *Tim Clifford*

Our first goal is to catalog airstrips in Florida and SE Georgia and identify those with recreational value. Of the 26-27 public-use grass strips in Florida, we are fortunate that they provide enhanced access to wilderness and ocean, Gulf and river shore line, features that don't exist in other areas. Our focus is to try and protect these strips so that they do not disappear. Some are on private land; some will end up with NPS once estates pass on; RAF may be the best vehicle to start protecting these types of strips.

Florida is an extremely aviation-friendly state; so far, their major experience is with business/commercial aviation. As everyone knows, we are heavily dependent on tourism. The tourism aspect of recreational aviation is an important card to play. Many aircraft sit bundled up in other states all winter; they could be bringing folks to enjoy Florida, demonstrated at Sun N Fun.

Idaho

– *Paul Collins*

This year has been a mixture of progress. We have had discussions with our state and federal representatives concerning airstrip access and upkeep. Idaho state officials understand the commercial importance of aviation.

Idaho statute exempts the private airstrip owner from liability for non-commercial use, resulting in strips remaining open to public access. This has positive impact on the private airstrip owners that I have conversed with.

Reed Ranch airstrip, which was transferred to the federal government by the former owners with the express stipulation that it remain open for public use,

was closed by the Forest Service. The problem is that it's now under federal ownership, but wasn't evaluated during the land exchange Environmental Assessment.

The IAA, the Idaho Aviation Foundation, and the Division of Aeronautics met in July with the USFS to request they permit use of Reed Ranch again. Bob Martin, JV DeThomas and I presented information, including outstanding testimonial letters by pilots that clearly proved the airport was in unrestricted use. Regardless of whether the State or the USFS operates it, the airstrip still needs some kind of environmental review.

The USFS knows there would be opposition if they began allowing use of the airport, because the airport wasn't reviewed in the EA, even though Reed is situated in a roaded corridor.

The required EA will not be quick. A nine-month process would be a very optimistic guess. Idaho Aeronautics has applied to operate Reed Ranch under a Special Use Permit (SUP), however, there will likely be opposition to the USFS granting it. We left the meeting feeling the USFS will cooperate to the extent they can throughout the process and they have been operating in good faith, and don't necessarily oppose airports. In the meantime our three entities will do what we can to reduce opposition to future airport operations.

Tim Clifford, RAF's Florida Liaison, was in Washington, D.C. in October, and met with Doug Crandall, Director, Legislative Affairs at the Forest Service to keep on top of this potentially landmark re-opening of a long-standing historical airport in the backcountry of Idaho. He's keeping information flowing to Senator Mike Crapo and his staff, along with multiple members of the various Idaho aviation organizations. It is our hope that we can move this forward so that we will be able to both set precedence that historically used airports must remain open for access, and facilitate the further opening of backcountry airports. We all owe Tim Clifford our thanks for his efforts.

There will be much activity between the IAA, the IAF, and Aeronautics to get the EA financed and expedited.

Montana

– *Carmine Mowbray*

Montana saw the dedication of three pilot shelters completed this year with varying levels of support from RAF: Columbus, Bozeman and Ryan Field.

The Montana Pilots Assoc. raised \$3831 for its Recreational Airstrip fund, and is again conducting a raffle for a Polaris Ranger, valued at over \$11,000 to be drawn from a pool of only 2,000 tickets at the Aviation Conference in Billings in March. Proceeds go to the Recreational Airstrip Committee fund.

On Father's Day, Jerry Cain flew to Twin Bridges with the RAF booth for some personal outreach at

State reports *continued*

their annual Fly -in.

In August the daily Missoulian and Billings Gazette published a story on Schafer Meadows titled "Flying into the Wild". John Gatchell of the Montana Wilderness Assoc. was quoted, saying "Although it's located in a wilderness, the Montana Wilderness Assoc. is not opposed to the airstrip. "That's an agreement we've always respected as part of the history that led to the Great Bear Wilderness, and it's important that the pilots support the wilderness. Pilots are good partners with respect to managing and maintaining it." This is clear evidence of the successful partnerships with various backcountry users the Recreational Aviation Foundation strives for, and the cooperative approach people have come to expect from RAF.

New Mexico

— *Rol Murrow*

Pilots Getting Organized

Back country pilot Larry Filener of Los Lunas Airpark and RAF Board Member Rol Murrow of Lindrith Airport met with a group of backcountry flying enthusiasts at Los Lunas Airpark on June 28. They discussed the advantages of forming a statewide group to champion backcountry flying, and Rol presented a PowerPoint slide show illustrating how the RAF and other groups have worked to preserve air-

strips in other states, and how to work with public agencies and private owners to develop preservation and maintenance programs for the strips.

Larry and Rol had met the prior month with NM state Director of Aviation Tom Baca and Safety and Education Bureau Chief Wayne York to discuss these issues, and present to them RAF's New Mexico version of its "Airstrip Issues and Facts for Public Lands Managers," a guide for agencies covering all the issues and positive programs supporting the preservation and promotion of airstrips.

New Mexico pilots will now catalog, verify, and prioritize all known airstrips in the state and will work with state agencies and officials to develop a plan for publicizing them and making them more available to recreational pilots.

A December meeting has been scheduled with Baca regarding the state's aviation transportation system plan update. We will discuss the economic and social importance of airstrips in the state, and the need for a process to prioritize, preserve, enhance, and maintain the airstrips.

RAF Director Profile – Dan Prill, Sand Coulee, Montana

Dan is a native of Wyoming, raised on the Tongue River near Ranchester. Dan attended Sheridan Junior College in Sheridan, then moved to Bozeman, graduating in 1970 from Montana State University with a Masters Degree in Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering. He moved to Great Falls to work for Drapes Engineering, doing Mechanical and Electrical Engineering for building construction, specializing in HVAC design and electrical design for many of the commercial and government buildings around the State of Montana. Dan, along with two other employees, purchased the engineering firm in 1983. In 1992 Dan merged the company with his brother's firm and the name was changed to Gordon-Prill-Drapes, Inc. This company has done the design and construction for many aerospace-related buildings in California, including the largest Class 100,000 clean room in the US for satellite construction and the building in which the Hubbell Space Telescope was assembled.

Dan's passion for flying started in Bozeman in 1968 with the "Flying Bobcats" but he had to quit because of financial reasons. He finished his private



Dan and Margie and their C185F

"Stop by anytime. Our airstrip is shown on the Great Falls sectional"

pilot's license 26 years later in 1994. Dan owns and flies a 1976 Super Cub and a Cessna A185F. He enjoys backcountry flying and camping and also owns a sport fishing lodge in far northern Saskatchewan. Dan married his wife of 35 years, Margie Ehman, in Great Falls in 1972. They have four grown children and one granddaughter. Dan and Margie are both retired and reside near Sand

Coulee, Montana. They have a private airstrip at their residence which is shown on the Great Falls Sectional. Since Senate Bill 318 passed the Montana Legislature in 2007, Dan and Margie invite visitors to stop by anytime. Dan has put his shoulder to the grindstone on RAF projects in Montana and looks forward to networking with supporters throughout the country.

Ryan Field and Pilot Shelter Dedication



RAF director Chuck Jarecki, Butchie and Ben Ryan and Gordon Rock in front of the pilot shelter

Montana weather smiled on the weekend of June 21 for the dedication of Ryan Field. The pilot shelter, funded in large part by major donor Gordon Rock of the Seattle area, adequately accommodated the meal preparations. 60 folks enjoyed a Montana-style barbecue and potluck. 15 aircraft flew in, from C170s to Gordon's turbine-powered C210.

Everyone had a chance to meet airstrip donors Ben and Butchie Ryan. Montana Dep't of Transportation Chief Jim Lynch tended the barbecue and saw firsthand the transportation aspect of backcountry flying.



Jim Lynch practicing his avocation of grilling beef

photos courtesy of Eric Anderson

Ryan Field Update: The facilities at Ryan Field have been upgraded to include removal of trees encroaching on the sides of the runway, tiedowns and the establishment of a campground, including a 24'X30' shelter with wood cook stove and picnic tables. Open for Public use – prior permission required from one of the following RAF directors who will send you an information/cautionary email:

Chuck Jarecki, 406-883-2248, skywagon@centurytel.net

Dan Prill, 406-736 5184, dprill@gpdinc.com

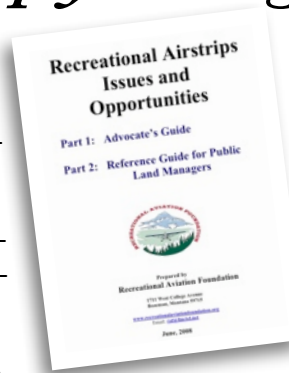
Jerry Cain, 406-362-4743, sgr@linctel.net

Free Guide to help your organization save airstrips!

The RAF is distributing its two-part "Recreational Airstrips– Issues and Opportunities."

Part 1, **Advocate's Guide** is a 35-page resource for pilots to bolster your efforts to save airstrips. Effectively navigate the public lands planning process; how the National Environmental Policy Act affects federal agencies' decision-making; landing on Federal Lands; effective participation at public meetings; writing effective letters; opportunities on State and private lands, and more.

Part 2, **Reference Guide for Public Land Managers**, is a 49-page tutorial for the public land manager



where recreational airstrips are involved. Covers basic topics such as pilot and airplane licensing, FAA regulations, environmental questions, aircraft noise, liability issues, existing agreements between pilot groups and agencies plus a useful appendix. Carefully researched and documented, it includes relevant photos and contains valuable information that the pilot would want to submit into the public record when there is an airstrip issue on Federal land.

The publication, in either a three ring binder or in PDF format, can be ordered from Chuck Jarecki at: skywagon@centurytel.net

The RAF would like to thank the Wolf Aviation Fund for its generous financial support in producing this educational project.

RAF Informational DVD

Available upon request.

Our only request is that you show it to anyone involved in recreational flying issues. Order both DVDs on the RAF website



Approx 40-minutes of breathtakingly beautiful flying to Utah's backcountry strips, this Jim Clark video production is available for your enjoyment for \$20.

“How-to” for new airstrip creation

—Ron Normandeau, Montana Liaison



The board tasked me with finding suitable parcels of private land adjacent to public lands with recreational opportunities.

All land within a public land boundary is not necessarily owned by the government. These "Private In-holdings" as they are called are parcels of private land owned by individuals or corporations within the boundaries of National Forests, BLM, and State lands, and are usually surrounded by public land thus giving them access to lands beyond the property boundary for recreational pursuits.

The RAF realizes that attempting to keep public access to landing strips on public land is a never-ending job because periodically the management plan comes up for review and the effort to keep strips open must be repeated. One solution is to site landing strips on land with recreational opportunity; and close to public land for expanded opportunities.

The procedure I have developed is to use the appropriate public agency's map to identify in-holdings or adjacent land of suitable size near recreational opportunities. I then visit the property using Google Earth to determine its possible suitability as to flatness, approaches, and estimated runway length. Using Google tools I tilt and rotate the image to establish the approach and departure path and orientation of the runway and measure the available surface for the runway and establish the estimated length.

I have created a presentation on 14 prospective sites for the RAF Board to consider with the Google Earth image with the runway depicted by a line representing the possible length, and a description of the area. (See sample, at right.)

Following the presentation, the steps are:
1) an aerial look to determine if a safe approach and departure path actually exists; 2) ground visit to the site to determine the actual runway length

and the amount of earthwork required to establish a runway surface; 3) research to determine who the owners are and their willingness to sell, lease, bequeath, etc; and finally 4) obtain funding to pay for it.

Using this approach the RAF can establish backcountry airstrips without the trials and tribulations of dealing with the public agencies and the recurring resource plan obstacles.



Lockhart Meadows

INHOLDING Headwaters of Boulder Cr.
Lockhart Ranch annotated on map
Camping, fishing, prospecting, hunting
airstrip 3900 ft, elev. 6,413ft
B_D NF T6N R7W s30

Familiar with R A W S?

Accessing the online Remote Automated Weather Station can be especially helpful when planning flights into the backcountry. While gathering wx forecasts, use this link for your specific region for data on conditions that could affect landing and takeoff: <http://raws.wrh.noaa.gov/roman>

Webcams? Pilots can get valuable real-time views using the webcams at strategic locations in the west, at Johnson Creek in Idaho, for example, at: www.ruralnetwork.net/%7Eyellowpinecm/
Become familiar with this resource. State Dep't of Transportation websites typically have current links.

Thank you, RAF!

Pat Morley, of Utah's Aviation Admin. wrote this to Director Chuck Jarecki upon receiving a copy of the **Land Manager's Guide**:

Thank you for the copy of the Recreational Airports on Public Lands notebook. I must say I'm very impressed. The content and quality is excellent.

I appreciate the work the RAF does to help preserve and enhance aviation in America's backcountry. Thank You!

Safe Flying, Pat (Morley)

Recreational Aviation Foundation

VISION – Keeping recreational aviation strong for generations to come by preserving the legacy and promoting the enjoyment of aviation in the backcountry of America.

MISSION – Taking a leadership position in preserving and enhancing recreational aviation resources on both public and private land throughout the United States for present and future generations by providing private financial support, expertise, and promoting safety.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES – The RAF works in a cooperative manner with public and private landowners/managers and aviation advocacy organizations on State and National levels.

Aviation is a valid and appropriate way to access recreational opportunities on public or private land.

Access to backcountry is well served by low-impact airstrips as trailheads.

Safety education will help ensure the future of successful recreational aviation.

Aviation safety through pilot education is paramount to the successful use and enjoyment of backcountry airstrips.

The RAF, a volunteer-driven organization, works to develop partnerships in protecting the common interest of the recreational flying community.

How To Support RAF

It's now easier than ever to become a supporter of this important effort to preserve and create public use recreational aviation facilities throughout the west for future generations. Use the secure "Donate now" button at www.recreationalaviationfoundation.org or mail in your tax-deductible contribution to Recreational Aviation Foundation, 1711 W. College, Bozeman MT 59715.

Consultation referrals for legacy giving, such as land or trusts. All supporter records are held in the strictest of confidence and never disclosed for commercial purposes.



Recreational Aviation Foundation

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Pilots throughout the west

use these invaluable reference books that open up thousands of recreational flying destinations. Get yours at

www.recreationalaviationfoundation.org