

How to approach and talk to your local Forest Supervisor to represent the interests of aviation on National Forest lands.

Step by step approach:

Step 1: Study the local forest to determine if there are existing abandoned or closed airstrips within the forest boundaries. If there are, gather all possible information on the particular strip (location, when closed and why, shape it is in now etc.). If there are not, identify locations for a new airstrip (old road, good field etc.). Relate this information to similar airstrips already existing in Montana or Idaho and gather info on these existing strips (location, who owns it, how it was opened or if it has remained open over the years etc. etc.)-any information possible, the more the better.

This information will be used in the following steps to help further the learning process for the forest managers and is very important.

Step 2: Contact to new local Forest Service aviation officer (each forest has one now). Explain to him/her we are interested in recreational, search and rescue, and safety aviation opportunities within the forest he/she works for and we are going to get involved with the planning phases of the Forest to represent these interests. Note to this person the points shown in step 3 about who we are and what our goals are.

This person may be a very good resource to start with and it will be good that they are aware of what the group is doing since they are directly related to aviation in their forest.

Step 3: Draft letter to the Forest Supervisor with the following points:

- a. We are the Recreational/Backcountry Airstrip committee of the Montana Pilots Association and want to be involved with the planning process currently being evaluated for this particular forest.
- b. We are interested in the land allocations and standards for the forest and would like the maps that depict these allocations and standards.
- c. We would like to review the old forest plan as well as the executive summary of the old plan.
- d. Our interests lie in land allocations that can provide recreational, search and rescue, and safety aviation opportunities within the forest.

Step 4: Go to the Forest headquarters and get a copy of the old forest plan as well as the executive summary and the land allocation maps of the old plan. This will be used to see if any previous aviation land allocations or standard uses exist or if they were specifically excluded.

Step 5: Provide the names and addresses of the Recreational/Backcountry Airstrip committee members to the Forest employee responsible for the drafting of the new plan so our group is officially involved with the planning process.

Step 6: Watch the forest website for information such as NEPA (National Environmental Protection Act) information that may pertain to a certain area of the forest. These are very important and deal with individual forest uses or change of use through out the life of the Forest plan. It is requirement for the FS to abide by this act in its management practices of the forest and provide this information for public input and record.