

The Manager's Approach



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Columbia & Pine Mountain Lake Airports

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Frequency of Publication Of the Manager's Approach

I have received several comments regarding the frequency of the publishing of the Manager's Approach during the last couple of years. It is very encouraging to know that the Manager's Approach is being read and that people find it very informative. People around the aviation community do want to know what is going on around our airports and Tuolumne County. However, it does take considerable effort to write the Manager's Approach and in this day of furloughs, limited budgets, and reduced staffing my work has to be prioritized and unfortunately finding time to write the Manager's Approach is sometimes difficult to do. For this reason, the Manager's Approach will be published as frequently as the workload allows with a goal of trying to publish it once every two months.

Hangar Inspections

The County owned hangars at both Columbia and Pine Mountain Lake Airports were inspected for compliance with the requirements of the County Ordinance Code and the Reserved Space Permit. At this time all hangars have been inspected and letters of Notice of Violation and Opportunity to Correct are being written.

The focus of the inspections was primarily on three things. The first focus was to verify that there was an aircraft being stored in each hangar and that the aircraft was registered to the hangar tenant. The second was to look for safety violations including, unapproved wiring and lighting, overloaded outlets and flammables or combustibles that could be considered a fire hazard. The third focus was to look for unauthorized storage

which could be anything not allowed by the Reserved Space Permit.

Violations were found in 19 hangars. Eight of the 19 hangars had multiple violations. The tenants will be notified that the violation(s) must be corrected and a re-inspection must be conducted to assure the tenant is in compliance with County Ordinance and the Reserved Space Permit.

Residential Through-The-Fence Update

At the January Airports Advisory Committee meeting held at the Groveland Community Hall I gave a presentation on the history, status and approach to the Residential Through-The-Fence (RTTF) issue which is preventing the Pine Mountain Lake Airport from receiving FAA Airport Improvement Program grants. During my presentation I made a point to inform the audience that the US House of Representatives had passed the FAA Reauthorization & Reform Act of 2012 the previous Friday which contained specific language addressing RTTF.

Shortly after the Airports Advisory Committee meeting I was informed that the Senate had also passed the FAA Reauthorization & Reform Act of 2012 and that it was being sent to the President for his signature. He signed the bill on February 14th and it became law.

The Conference Committee Report on H.R. 658 contains language which in part states:

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2), a sponsor of a general aviation airport shall not be considered to be in violation of this subtitle, or to be in violation of a grant assurance made under this section or under any other provision of law as a condition for the receipt of Federal financial assistance for airport development,

solely because the sponsor enters into an agreement that grants to a person that owns residential real property adjacent to or near the airport access to the airfield of the airport for the following:

“(A) Aircraft of the person.

“(B) Aircraft authorized by the person.

“(2) THROUGH-THE-FENCE AGREEMENTS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—An agreement described in paragraph (1) between an airport sponsor and a property owner (or an association representing such property owner) shall be a written agreement that prescribes the rights, responsibilities, charges, duration, and other terms the airport sponsor determines are necessary to establish and manage the airport sponsor’s relationship with the property owner.

“(B) TERMS AND CONDITIONS.—An agreement described in paragraph (1) between an airport sponsor and a property owner (or an association representing such property owner) shall require the property owner, at minimum—

“(i) to pay airport access charges that, as determined by the airport sponsor, are comparable to those charged to tenants and operators on airport making similar use of the airport;

“(ii) to bear the cost of building and maintaining the infrastructure that, as determined by the airport sponsor, is necessary to provide aircraft located on the property adjacent to or near the airport access to the airfield of the airport;

“(iii) to maintain the property for residential, noncommercial use for the duration of the agreement;

“(iv) to prohibit access to the airport from other properties through the property of the property owner; and

“(v) to prohibit any aircraft refueling from occurring on the property.”.

I’m communicating with the managers of airports with RTTF access and developing a plan to address both the requirements of the new legislation and FAA policy.

Aviation Gatherings

Aviation gatherings at an airport can be both beneficial and fun. Each year there are numerous gatherings (fly-ins) at Columbia Airport. These include the Gathering of the Luscombes, the International 180-185 Club,

the Taylorcrafts, the Bellancas, the Western Canards, just to name a few. It is important that the organizers of these events properly plan their event to assure the safety of the pilots and the public. If you or your group would like some simple to follow guidelines to help you plan and execute your event please contact my office.

Stupid Pilot Tricks

Down Wind Take-Offs

The other day I heard about a plane taking off on Runway 29, the grass runway with a significant tailwind. All pilots should know that take-offs are not allowed on Runway 11 (it is published in the FAA Airport Facility Directory and most airport guides) because of the potential conflict with aircraft taking off on Runway 17. There are several ways a pilot can determine the wind direction and speed at Columbia Airport which is critical for safe take-offs and landings. A windsock and tetrahedron are located mid field adjacent to Runway 17/35. Both are clearly visible from the blast pad on Runway 29. There is a flag on top of the hangars south of Runway 11/29, and there is the AWOS. No pilot should be ignorant of the direction and speed of the wind. Not using the wind to your advantage shows poor pilot decision making.

The Manager’s Approach is published by the Tuolumne County Airports Manager for the purpose of keeping our community informed of local aviation and airport issues. You can contact me at:

Tuolumne County Airports
Jim Thomas, Airports Manager
10723 Airport Road, Columbia, CA 95310
209-533-5685
jthomas@co.tuolumne.ca.us

Noise Sensitive Areas

As a reminder to our local pilots, we have several noise sensitive areas near our airports. Maps showing these areas are posted at both airports. Please be neighborly and avoid these areas.