



Montana and the Sky

Montana Department of Transportation

Aeronautics Division

Vol. 62, No. 7

July 2011

Art Contest Winners Flown to Helena

By David J. Hoerner, Safety & Education

Each year in June, MDT Aeronautics sponsors an art contest for all school aged children. Students interested in aviation have the opportunity to draw pictures which are then judged by Aeronautics staff.

This program is designed to promote career opportunities and aviation awareness in the state of Montana.

There are three categories Category 1 - Grades K-4; Category 2 - Grades 5-8 and Category 3 - Grades 9-12, the first place winner in each category is flown to Helena with their parents or family members to be presented their awards by Lieutenant Governor John Bohlinger and MDT Director Jim Lynch.

This year's winners were Aurora Boise, a fourth grader from Emigrant; Flint Brewer, an eighth grader from Chinook; and Nolan Coldwell a tenth grader and two time winner from Jordan. On the recent trip, Director Lynch gave a narrated tour of the Capitol Building, explained how government works and treated the students to a rare visit inside the upper reaches of the Capitol Dome. John Bohlinger provided insight and wisdom to the children about integrity and trusting their instincts to make wise decisions.

The day ended with an enjoyable lunch at the Windbag Café followed by a flight back to the winners' home towns.

This program creates unique opportunities to the participants and hopefully opens the children's eyes and minds to their future.



At awards ceremony, from left: MDT Director Jim Lynch, Flint Brewer, Lt. Governor John Bohlinger, Aurora Boise, and Nolan Coldwell.



The winners and their families enjoy a fun-filled visit to the Capitol.



1st place entry by Nolan Coldwell of Jordan. See Flint and Aurora's winning entries on page 6.

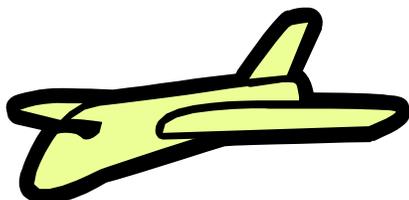
Administrator's Column

Ryan Field Fly-in: AOPA President Craig Fuller attended the annual fly-in at Ryan Field, a turf airstrip near Glacier National Park. Craig also stopped in at the Meadow Creek work session. Craig put together a slide show of his trip depicting our beautiful country. Enjoy the show via the following link: <http://blog.aopa.org/aopanow/?p=818>

Senators Ask USDOT to Stop Plans to Dismantle BARR program: Twenty-six U.S. senators, including Montana's Jon Tester, have signed a letter to Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood that raised concerns with the government's plan to dismantle the Block Aircraft Registration Request (BARR) program. The program allows general aviation aircraft owners the ability to block public dissemination of aircraft movement and prevents unauthorized, non-governmental entities from knowing the location of private citizens. The BARR program is currently being debated by conferees on the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization bill.

Grand Canyon asked to modify noise control plan: A National Park Service (NPS) proposal to raise the upper boundary of flight-free zones over the Grand Canyon National Park to reduce noise would reduce general aviation access and safety, according to the National Business Aviation Association and AOPA. The NPS draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) offers four alternatives—including a NPS preferred alternative—for managing aircraft overflight activity and restoring natural quiet to the park. The NPS-preferred alternative emerged from years of cooperative efforts by the Grand Canyon Working Group, a group formed to help the NPS and FAA develop alternatives for the park. The preferred alternative would maintain the existing four GA corridors for transiting the park—but would raise the ceiling of flight-free zones above the park to 17,999 feet msl. The current ceilings are 8,000 or 14,500 msl. These existing flight-free areas, and corridors, sectors and altitudes established for use by tour overflights have already greatly served to reduce low altitude general aviation and air tour noise and restore natural quiet in the park.

FAA releases guidelines for marking MET towers: The FAA released guidelines for the voluntary marking of meteorological evaluation towers (METs) in an effort to make them more visible to pilots conducting agricultural and other low-level operations in their vicinity. In its policy statement, FAA urges parties constructing these towers to acknowledge the potential hazard caused by these towers. The guidance is not mandatory but it is hoped that in the interest of aviation safety, developers and landowners will consider this guidance for METs and follow the guidelines. The FAA recommends voluntary marking of METs less than 200 feet agl in accordance with marking guidance contained in the Advisory Circular 70-7460-1, *Obstruction Marking and Lighting*. The FAA took action in response to concerns expressed by many state governments (including Montana) and agricultural operators about the visibility of METs. METs less than 200 feet agl are not subject to regulatory notice requirements and do not trigger FAA aeronautical studies. A complete copy of the guidelines can be found at: <http://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2011/06/24/2011-15746/marketing-meteorological-evaluation-towers>



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Brian Schweitzer, Governor
Jim Lynch, Director

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Telephone - (406) 444-2506
Fax - (406) 444-2519
P.O. Box 200507
Helena, MT 59620-0507
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Calendar of Events

July 21-23 – Second Annual Aerobatics competition at Cut Bank Airport. Includes top aerobatic planes and pilots from the U.S. and Canada. Friday practice, Saturday competition and Sunday carry over in case of bad weather. For additional information contact the airport at (406) 873-8683 or go to www.cutbankairport.org

July 23 – Benchmark Work Session. For further information phone (406) 444-2506.

July 23 – The Gallatin Valley Hangar is hosting a poker run and pig roast from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (Bozeman, Three Forks, Townsend, Helena, White Sulphur Springs, Dillon, Twin Bridges, Ennis). Registration fee is \$10 per participant. For further information contact Robert Shropshire (406) 580-7773 or John Sackett (406) 579-2789.

July 24 – Good Ole' Days Huckleberry Pancake Breakfast and Young Eagle EAA Fly-In, St. Ignatius Airport; 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Helicopter rides will be available for all ages. For further information call Mike Kuefler at (406) 544-2274.

July 30-31 – Montana's Military Open House, sponsored by Malmstrom AFB 341st Missile Wing and supported by the Montana Air National Guard 120th Fighter Wing, is July 30-31 at the Air National Guard Facility at Great Falls International Airport. The Navy Blue Angels headline the performances which also feature the Army Black Daggers Parachute Demonstration Team, Air Force A-10 West Demonstration and Mustang 51 Heritage Flight, and numerous civilian acts. Military and civilian static displays will fill the ramp along with a Kid Zone, military recruiter interactive displays, and food, beverage, and souvenir concessions. Gates open at 9:30 each day with free parking and free admission. A Temporary Flight Restriction will be in place for Great Falls International Airport from 12:00-5:00 pm on July 30 and 31. Please check NOTAMS for field restrictions. Visit www.greatfallsairshow.com for more Open House details.

August 4-6 – Montana Antique Airplane Association's Annual Fly In at Three Forks. Flour Bombing & Spot Landing. Free camping on the Airport. For further information call Ken Flikkema at (406) 580-6207; Bob Green at (406) 539-7830 or Tim Linn at (406) 451-5897.

August 6 – Ronan Pioneer Days. Ronan airport will hold an open house and will start with a \$5 pancake breakfast at 8:00 a.m. and Young Eagles airplane rides for kids between 8 & 17 years of age, with their parent or guardian approval, fly free. Helicopter rides will be available for all ages and Skydive Montana will be giving demonstrations of what it takes to become a skydiver. Tours of the airport and facilities will be conducted by local pilots and hanger owners. For further information, call Nels Jensen at (406) 644-2371 or Mauri Morin (406) 249-2250

August 13 – Superior Airport Fly In sponsored by Mineral County Chamber of Commerce and Mineral County Pilots Association. For further information phone Mary Jo Berry (406) 822-4800 or email spr4800@blackfoot.net.

August 13 – Big Timber Airport Fly In and Antique Car show hosted by the American Legion Auxiliary, Unit 19. Pancake breakfast to be served starting at 7:00a.m. All aircraft and cars invited. Registration to start at 7:00 a.m. for the pilots and car owners. Random drawings for Pilot and Car owners only! Trophies to be awarded for top two airplanes and antique cars. For further information please contact Lucinda Klostermeier at (406) 930-1044, Norene Brown at (406) 930-0120 or Phyllis Bryan at (406) 930-1037. You can also e-mail: malinois@cablemt.net Pilots must bring their own tie downs.

August 14 – Hysham Airport Fly In/Drive In Pancake Breakfast & Remote Control Airplane Show. Remote control show will start at 9:00 a.m.; runway will be closed from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

August 19 – National Aviation Day. For further information visit <http://www.wright-brothers.org>.

August 19-21 – Tenth Annual Montana Fun Weekend Fly-in and Car Show. Fly-in Breakfast Saturday and Sunday. Bowling ball drops on Saturday before the drag races. Prize for direct hit is \$350.00. All aircraft and cars invited with \$100.00 awards for top three aircraft on display, and top five cars. For additional information contact the airport at (406) 873-8683 or go to www.cutbankairport.org

September 9-11 – Mountain Search Pilot Clinic, Helena. For further information phone Dave Hoerner at (406) 444-9568 or email dhoerner@mt.gov.

September 10 – Polson Fly In, Chapter 1122 of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) will be hosting a Fly-In at the Polson Airport (8S1) on Saturday, September 10. Admission is free. The festivities will begin with a breakfast of pancakes, ham and eggs for only \$5 starting at 8:00 a.m. There will be all sorts of aircraft on display, including float planes, homebuilt, experimental and antique aircraft. There will be raffle prizes, concessions, and airplane and helicopter rides. Drawings for free AV Gas for pilots who fly into the Fly-In. Camping is free. Kids can sign up for future Young Eagle rides. For additional information call Mauri Morin at (406) 249-2250

Administrator's Column, continued

Guidebook for Developing and Leasing Airport Property: The Transportation Research Board's Airport Cooperative Research Program (ACRP) Report 47: *Guidebook for Developing and Leasing Airport Property* explores issues associated with developing and leasing available airport land and summarizes best practices from the perspective of the airport sponsor. The guidebook includes a diverse set of case studies that show several approaches airports have taken to develop and lease property for both aeronautical uses and non-aeronautical uses. The project that developed the guidebook also produced two presentation templates designed to help airports in effective stakeholder communication regarding developing and leasing airport property. The templates, designed for a non-technical audience, provide content, examples, and definitions for a presentation to community stakeholders. The templates, one for aeronautical use development presentations, and the second for non-aeronautical use development presentations are available only online. Check it out at: www.trb.org

Work Session Rescheduled

The Benchmark work session has been rescheduled for July 23. The Montana Pilots Association Vigilante Hangar will provide dinner for all volunteers after work is completed. For further information phone (406) 444-2506.

MDT attempts to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person participating in any service, program or activity of the Department. Alternative accessible formats of this information will be provided upon request. For further information call (406) 444-6331 or TTY (406) 444-7696. MDT produces 1,950 copies of this public document at an estimated cost of 39 cents each, for a total cost of \$760. This includes \$480 for postage.

Hoerner's Corner

By David J. Hoerner, Safety & Education

One of the wisest decisions a pilot can make while enjoying Montana from the air is to invite a pilot to come along in their own airplane. That friend might just be the best aircraft locator available. If you have taken precautions and acquired a Spot Tracker, Personal Locator Beacon or 406 ELT, you have invested in you and your family's future and I commend your effort. But, remember those locators must be activated to work.

Depending solely on the 121.5 ELT to alert search and rescue personnel is like flying your airplane with only one magneto working. This would not be wise and something a professional pilot would never do. Your 121.5 Emergency Locator signal is no longer being monitored by satellites. Only other pilots who might be listening to 121.5 will hear your signal and in the mountains the signal may never be heard. These transmitters aren't fool proof either. A fire, hard landing or damaged antennae might deem your ELT useless.

Your PLB should be carried on your person whenever you are flying. If you have to leave your aircraft in a hurry, it goes with you.

Another airplane could save the day, but good communication skills are mandatory. Arrange an air-to-air frequency that works and never change plans unless both parties discuss, agree and understand the change. Pre-plan flight routes if communication is lost and stick to the plan. If you have to make an emergency landing, the arrangements you make with your accompanying pilot and aircraft could save your life.

Rest assured that if you come up missing, MDT Aeronautics staff will be alerted and will engage a comprehensive search. There will be many agencies and individuals involved in looking for you and your name will become well known.

If MDT Aeronautics has your Spot Tracker Log-in name and user password, finding your approximate location could take just a few minutes of time. We have thousands of square miles of heavily timbered mountains and thick brush in Montana. There are airplanes scattered throughout the region that have never been found.

We have instituted a program at MDT Aeronautics where you can, at your direction send us your user name and password for your Spot Tracker. If you don't return from a flight, tell someone you trust where you're going and when you will be back. Instruct them to call MDT Aeronautics with this information if you don't return, we will look up your last known position and launch a rescue.

When you use your Spot Tracker you must: **set the spot tracker in the track mode.** In this mode it will send out a signal every few minutes and leave a crumb trail of your flight path. In an emergency call MDT Aeronautics at 406-444-2506 or 406-841-7022 and ask for the Aeronautics Duty person.

If you don't plan well for the unexpected, it is possible that you could become a member of this missing pilot/airplane elite club.

Montana Pilot Flies to the North Star!

By Richard Wissenbach

It sounds next to impossible, but Bitterroot Mountain pilot William Athens accomplishes just that.

He routinely flies a 1954 Cessna 180 to North Star – North Star Ranch that is, twenty-six acres of privately owned land in Idaho, surrounded by the remote Selway Bitterroot Wilderness.

You'd better like the close proximity of rugged mountain tops, rock strewn hillsides, and steep forested slopes, or the journey will seem as long and far away as the image conjured up by its name. The trip is not for the faint of heart and the skills required to make it safely aren't acquired overnight.

"Four-Zero-Charlie landing North Star" calls out Athens as he descends downstream, skillfully banking the four-place tail dragger following the contour of the winding Selway River. He keeps tight control of airspeed, his right hand firmly adjusting the throttle as necessary for altitude corrections, the other hand grasping the control yoke, maintaining the crafts' airspeed just above a stall. The intended spot is the very end of the 700' strip, right on the edge of a bluff. The high wing aircraft, a favorite of mountain pilots, lands within a couple of feet of the end. Arrive short and he'll slam into the hillside, use too much of the precious ground and he'll run up and over into the ravine beyond. It's obvious he wears the airplane, as the red and white bird slows quickly under his command. When complimented on his textbook landing he modestly responds with a grin, "It's no big deal."

The 27-year-old "Alex", as he's known to local pilots, maintains the ranch property, ferrying in family, friends, equipment and supplies as needed from the Stevensville, Montana airport where the Cessna is hangared. The love they have for their place is obvious. Everything is in its place and although some buildings show signs of aging, everything is very meticulously maintained and improved upon. Their green thumb is apparent with the lack of noxious weeds noted and a wide variety of vegetables found in the two gardens fed by pure mountain springs.

"North Star Ranch is the Crown Jewel of the Selway", states Alex rather matter of factly. It would be hard to argue that statement, as the beauty, tranquility, and quietness of the secluded location is quite simply breathtaking. Located on an outcropping on a bend overlooking the scenic Selway River, the North Star Ranch was formerly owned and operated by a famed local outfitter, the late Kenneth (Punk) Wolfinbarger.

This is pure, natural, and untamed wilderness. Forest Road 223, a one-lane spur of the Magruder Corridor Road, which climbs over Nez Perce Pass, ends at Paradise. That in itself backs Alex's claim. The North Star Ranch is 10 miles beyond Paradise! If you have to go past Paradise to get in here, it must be a heavenly gem! There are two ways in: either a long, long walk on a dusty rattlesnake infested trail, or a descent from the skies above. The North Star is one of only three private parcels left in the Selway. Running Creek Ranch is just upstream, with Selway Lodge downstream close to the junction of Bear Creek and the Selway River. There are two public use airstrips, Shearer and Moose Creek, maintained by the



Alex Athens

National Forest. Alex is one of just a handful of bush pilots to have landed at all of them. Float trips on the Selway River are through a highly sought after limited permit system. This is a true wilderness experience.

"My father stopped in here 12 years ago. He had been looking into buying Running Creek Ranch, located just upriver. Punk Wolfinbarger, the previous owner of North Star, was looking for just the right person to sell to, and the match was perfect." Alex points out his father's favorite spot, a chair on the main cabin's stairway balcony, with a commanding view of the water flowing below and the wildlife covered hillside beyond. It's obvious the recent unexpected sudden death of his dad is still fresh in his memory. His greatest love was spending time with his family in a place they all cherish.

Alex, a graduate of the University of Montana with a degree in Anthropology, is also an Instrument Rated Commercial Pilot. He most recently obtained a Flight Instructor Rating, adding to his already impressive credentials. Prior to operating the Cessna he used a two-place fabric-covered Citabria. The all aluminum Cessna, while over twice his age, appears as new. It is maintained by experienced local FAA certificated Airframe and Powerplant Mechanics. Alex is continually upgrading it, looking forward to replacing the 230 horsepower engine with 280 for improved performance when operating near gross weight conditions. Over a half a century since its manufacture, it's hard to find its equal for the mission - performance, speed, fuel consumption, and most of all, reliability. The only substitute for power is more power!

When the snow flies, he'll install hydraulic wheel-skis, enabling him to takeoff with wheels extended from a dry hard surface. Upon reaching the remote, snowed in ranch, he'll manually lower the skis, gingerly feeling his way onto the white blinding surface. This requires Alex to continually change his technique depending upon the varying snow conditions. His training here didn't come from books or a university, it's been on the job experience, and very intense.

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Montana Pilot Flies to the North Star, continued

Depending on prevalent wind conditions on the small field, Alex may take advantage of another strip, slightly longer and oriented in a completely different direction. “The wind blows 20 knots on a hot summer day” says Alex. Takeoff on that “runway” is equally as technical. It requires maneuvering between trees on the far end and negotiating the tight confines of the narrowing canyon. Alex skillfully pulls on several notches of flaps, safely popping the aircraft into the air, accelerating in ground effect momentarily before climbing. Once sufficient altitude is reached, one’s stomach is finally allowed to slightly relax. The notes of the 88" McCauley propeller turning 2600 RPM briefly pierce the cool mountain air, before returning to the silence and stillness of moments earlier. The pleasing sound of the North West, music to the ears of aviation enthusiasts, falls harmlessly below, having no effect on the deer, elk, bear, or big bad wolves!

The purchase of the ranch stimulated Alex’s interest in flying, and there was no looking back. Alex received his initial Private License with noted Mountain Pilot Instructor Wendy Beye.

An additional Instrument rating and extensive mountain training in the Cessna 180 was obtained through local mountain pilot Joe Rimensberger of Osprey Aviation, who is an experienced backcountry operator and retired airline pilot. Joe currently operates a Cessna TU206, catering to several wilderness outfitters as well as flying for the Forest Service during fire season.

It’s hard to keep up with Alex, on the ground or in the air, as he’s continually on the go and in motion.

When the winds aloft cooperate, he’ll fly direct as the crow flies, bee lining over the top picking his way through mountain passes and across ridges. Other times he may have to aviate through scenic mountain canyons, adorned with high mountain lakes.

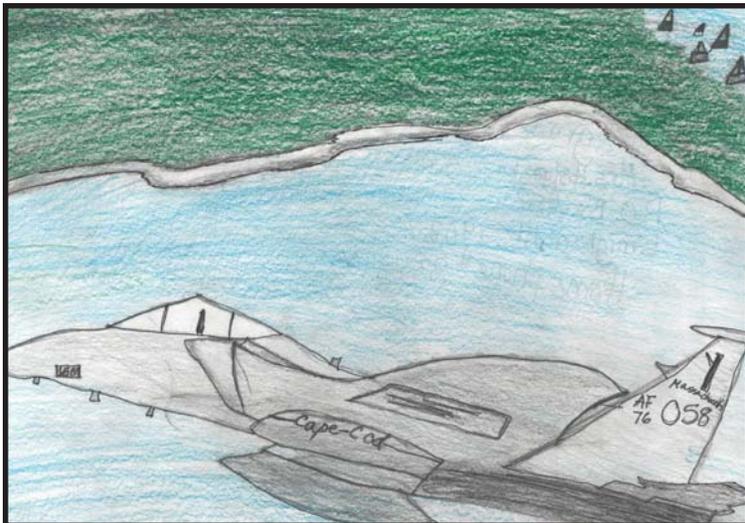
Alex Athens is constantly upgrading his mountain skills, the hangar wall plastered with photos of his flying adventures, including the best and most technical Idaho has to offer, as well as flying Montana - The Last Best Airspace. While yet young, Alex has accumulated hundreds of hours in the last six years of flying the Selway.

The Museum of Mountain Flying in Missoula, Montana utilizes a phrase coined by co-founder and author Steve Smith in his book “*Fly the Biggest Piece Back*”. “*Tough Planes! Tough Pilots! Tough Flying!*”

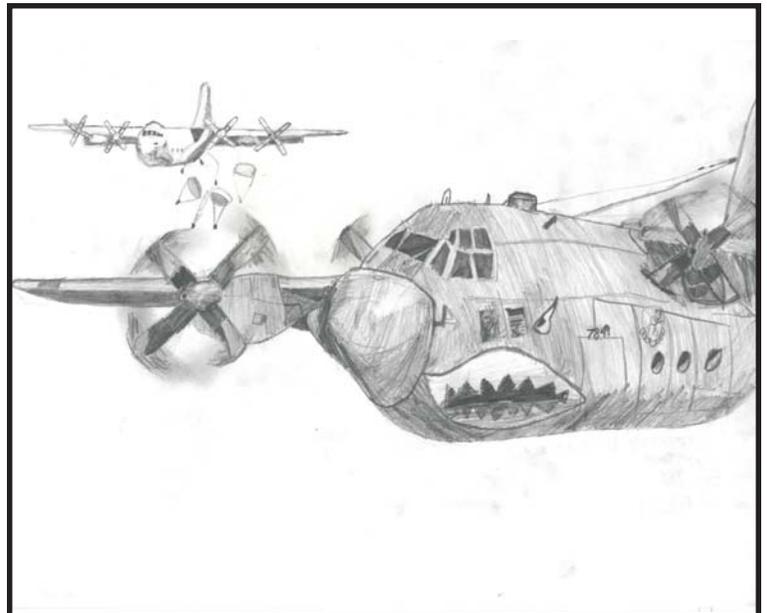
While far from being a relic, Alex routinely flies the routes pioneered by famed pilots of legend. A tough plane, a tough pilot, and tough flying! He returns from the core of the wilderness slightly chirping the tires, as they meet the expansive asphalt of Stevensville’s 3800 foot long lighted airport.

Alex swings the tail of the airplane towards the front of the hangar door and pulls the mixture control to the idle-cutoff position, allowing the six- cylinder Continental Engine to shut down. It will soon cool in the night air. Alex’s mission for the day is over, but he like the motor is ready to be primed and roar to life with the dawn of tomorrow and the promise of a new adventure. Every mountain flight is unique and Alex looks forward to his next trip to North Star.

Art Contest, continued



First place category 1: Aurora Boise of Emigrant.



First place category 2: Flint Brewer of Chinook.

In Memory of Marvin A. Edwards



Marvin A. Edwards, 65, a cropduster, Blaine County Coroner, Army National Guard veteran, and owner of Edwards Funeral Home since 1972, died in a plane crash on June 21, near Hogeland.

Survivors include his wife, Cherie Edwards of Chinook; sons Eric and Sean Edwards, both of Chinook, and Tyler Edwards of Portland, Ore.; daughter Camia Savage of Casper, Wyo.; sisters Gladys Edwards of Billings, and Joyce Kjelstrup of Sidney; and seven grandchildren.

Originally published in *Great Falls Tribune*, June 23, 2011.

Much Accomplished at Meadow Creek

By Wade Cebulski, Airport/Airways Bureau

The 2011 Meadow Creek work session has had another successful year in both attendance and work completed. On Friday aircraft arrived from many different locations, including a heavily-modified RV from California.

Saturday morning a heavy rain shower turned a few incoming aircraft around. There were even reports of a few snowflakes from a couple of inbound aircraft, but by 10:00 a.m. the weather had improved tremendously. By the end of the weekend a total of nineteen aircraft and one helicopter were in attendance.

The local EAA Chapter provided delicious barbecued steaks for lunch. Craig Fuller, the AOPA President was also a surprise visitor that flew in with some representatives from the RAF which were having their annual fly-in at Ryan field. The Kounis brothers from *Pilot Getaways* magazine were also in attendance with Mr. Fuller. I am sure Montana will be presented well in future articles.

With the weather being so cold this spring the grass was not very high but the volunteers worked hard at removing brush and vegetation around the parking area and runway. Cutting up downed trees, cleaning outhouses, changed the wind socks and lots of other maintenance items.

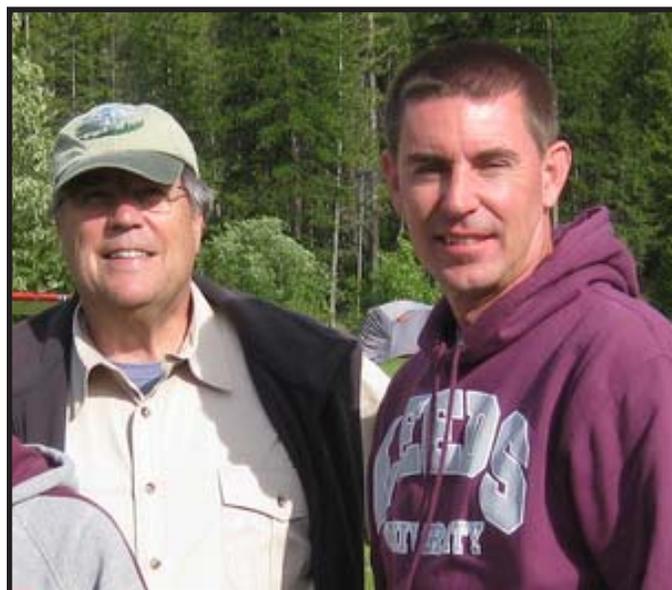
A great time was had by all who chose to camp for the weekend. Of course there was tons of airplane stories, good food and great camaraderie.



Volunteers (front to back) Scott Newpower, Wade Cebulski, Ernie Carlson, Mike Ferguson, and Robert Shropshire.



Meadow Creek airstrip offers a little bit of paradise to pilots.



AOPA President Craig Fuller (left) and Scott Newpower.

Aeronautics Division
Montana Department of Transportation
2630 Airport Road
PO Box 200507
Helena, Montana 59620-0507

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Summer Season in Full Swing

Summer has finally arrived at Yellowstone Airport and passenger enplanements are showing it. SkyWest is reporting solid travel numbers for the season. General aviation (GA) travel is up and the airport saw its first GA fly-in event with the Colorado Pilot's Association last month resulting in over 30 individuals staying at the pilot's campground at the airport.

After nearly five years of managing the airport in West Yellowstone, Anthony Bean has decided to move on and pursue a new challenge at Idaho's Pullman-Moscow Airport. His time in West Yellowstone was extremely productive for the airport and his efforts will continue to be applauded at Yellowstone. The Department of Transportation Aeronautics Division is currently seeking a replacement for Bean and received numerous applicants.

Things are still progressing at Yellowstone Airport with the shorthanded crew of three, including interim manager and Chief of Operations Jeff Heaney, Fire Chief Tom Cherhoniak, and airport management intern Jacques Thibodeaux.

A much needed airport-signage overhaul project was recently awarded to Pavlik Electric and work should begin sometime in the next ninety days. This project includes replacing every existing sign on the airfield and repairs to be done to the Precision Approach Path Indicator, or PAPI.



FLY WYS
Yellowstone Airport
Montana