

Montana and the Sky

Montana Department of Transportation

Aeronautics Division

Vol. 76, No. 4

April 2025

40th Annual Aviation Conference a Big Hit!

The 40th annual Aviation Organizations of Montana (AOM) Aviation Conference in Missoula was a door buster! The exhibit hall was filled with over 540 people gathered for the event. The conference was full of excellent presenters speaking on medicine, search and rescue, safety, regulations, stories of adventure, and more.

Three keynote speakers entertained and educated audiences during luncheons and banquets and many concurrent speaking sessions took place throughout the day.

Five Wright Brothers Master Pilot Awards (celebrating 50 years of flying), two Charles Taylor Master Mechanic Awards (celebrating 50 years of being an aircraft mechanic), and over \$60,000 in scholarships were awarded at the conference.

The Montana Pilots Association (MPA) partnered with Robert Peccia and Associates and Northstar/Neptune Aviation to offer a static display and social at the Missoula airport Friday evening.

Another successful Mechanics Refresher and Inspection Authorization (IA) renewal seminar was completed at the conference. Around 70 mechanics renewed their inspection authorization this year. The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) Aeronautics Division had the first state-sponsored IA renewal course in the nation in 1963 and have provided it annually since then.

The 2026 AOM Aviation Conference is scheduled to be held at the end of February in Billings.

Thanks to all who spoke, volunteered, sponsored, exhibited, attended, and enjoyed this year's conference. You made the conference a success!

Wright Brothers Awards

Wilbur Rodger Fultz
Robert Charles Hollister
Daniel R. Lilja
Wayne Gordon Meyer
Michael Odom Schwartz

Charles Taylor Awards

Wilbur Rodger Fultz
Thomas A. Hillesland



Aeronautics Board Member Changes

Bill Lepper has stepped down as Chair but will remain on the board for the remainder of his term. Thank you, Bill, for your time as chair and continuing to serve on the board!!

Pam Chamberlin had dedicated four years to the Aeronautics Board and has decided to step down this term. We would like to thank Pam for her hard work, time and dedication to serving on the board. Thank you, Pam!

Please welcome **Tim Damrow** to the Aeronautics Board. Tim will be taking Pam Chamberlin's place, representing Montana Airport Managers Association (MAMA). Welcome, Tim and thank you for your service to the aviation community!

Tim Robertson will be serving his second term and is the new board Chair (pending confirmation). Thank you, Tim, for stepping up to serve as Chair and for serving on the board for a second term!



Courtesy Car Grant Application Period

The Airport Courtesy Car Application period is open from April 1 to May 31. There are four reimbursement grants of up to \$5,000 each available for a courtesy car. A municipality or eligible third party may apply.

If you would like to see a courtesy car at your airport, talk with your airport manager or those in charge of an eligible third party that may receive the grant.

Please note the link for the online application is available beginning April 1 and closes at 5 p.m. on May 31.

For more information, contact Stephen Torske at the MDT Aeronautics Division at 406-444-9569 or storske@mt.gov

The application and more information about the program can be found at: <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/aviation/courtesy-cars.shtml> or scan the QR code.



Summer Work Sessions

Work sessions involve a variety of upkeep and maintenance activities and may include everything from filling gopher holes to painting, weeding, replacing windsocks, cutting wood, repairing fences, and more. Work sessions are a great way to meet other aviation-minded folks in the state, these volunteers help keep these airstrips maintained.

The following work sessions are currently scheduled for this summer:

June 7 - Spotted Bear Work Session

June 14 - Meadow Creek Work Session (Bring a chainsaw to if you have one)

July 19 - Schafer Meadows Work Session (Manual tools only)

***Please note the Spotted Bear work session*
date has been moved this year.**

This is because of frequent bad weather on the legacy work session weekend.

Lincoln Airport Ground Leases Available

The Lincoln airport has a paved taxi lane that provides prepared space for up to seventeen more hangar locations. These sites are mostly prepped with a lot of the dirt work completed and are ready to be built on. There are two remaining hangar pads on the main taxiway with a runway rare "beach front property" view! These plots could be combined to build one large hangar.

If you want to build a hangar at this prime mountain valley airport, please contact Stephen Torske at 406-444-9569 or storske@mt.gov for more information.

Where Are They Now?

Multiple aviation scholarship winner, Gracie Johnson from Billings, has been on an impressive journey! In 2023, at age 17, she obtained her private pilot certificate, followed by her instrument rating and commercial certificate in mid-January 2025. On January 29th, she earned her CFI (Certified Flight Instructor) certificate. The following day, she became an instrument flight instructor. Just about a week later, she became a multi-engine commercial pilot! Achieving these ratings in such a short time is a remarkable feat.

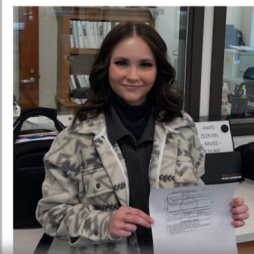
While working full-time at the Billings Olive Garden for eight months, Gracie dedicated her free time to studying and building flight hours to meet the commercial minimums. Her hard work has paid off, as she has recently been offered a CFI position in Minnesota and is currently awaiting her start date with 330 flight hours to her name.

Gracie has ambitious plans for her future, hoping to instruct for several years before transitioning to a small charter operation and ultimately pursuing a career with the airlines.

She has also been fortunate to receive several scholarships that have significantly aided her training. In 2023, she received scholarships from the Aviation Organizations of Montana, Mike and Julie Meloche, Montana Antique Aircraft Association, and Montana Pilots Association Jr. Pilot Scholarships. In 2024, she received the Brett Thoft Memorial Scholarship, Edwards Jet Center, and Stewart Smishek Memorial Scholarships. These funds alleviated a great deal of financial pressure, allowing her to focus on completing her ratings.

Gracie wishes to extend a big thanks to the MDT Aeronautics Division for their support in advertising these scholarships and assisting with applications, which has made a difference in Gracie's journey. She wants to give an even larger thanks to those who funded these scholarships.

Gracie's determination and hard work are truly inspiring, and we look forward to seeing where her aviation career takes her next!



Photos courtesy of Gracie Johnson

Calendar of Events

April 11 - Aviation Awareness Art Contest submission Deadline.

May 17 - Lincoln Fly-In. Pancake breakfast from 8 to 11 a.m. every third Saturday each month starting May 17 ending September 20. For more information, contact Doug Vulcan at 406-362-4473 or vulcandg406@gmail.com.

June 7 - Spotted Bear Work Party. Work starts at 9 a.m. Lunch provided by the Flathead Montana Pilots Association hangar. For more information, contact Scott Newpower at 406-670-3169.

June 7 - Butte Wings and Wheels Fly-in or Drive-in. 8 to 10 a.m. For more information, contact Walt McIntosh at 406-670-1846.

June 14 - Big Timber Fly-In Breakfast and Car Show. 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. Breakfast and lunch will be served starting at 7 a.m. Hosted by Yellowstone Air Service. Donations accepted for breakfast. For more information, contact Kirk Bryer 406-930-1780.

June 14 - Meadow Creek Airstrip Work Party. Work starts at 9 a.m. If you're handy with a chainsaw, bring one along as we have a lot of downed trees to cut and stack for firewood. Lunch will be provided. For more information, contact Scott Newpower at 406-670-3169.

June 14 - Choteau Fly-In. 6:30 to 10 a.m. Free breakfast starting at 6:30 a.m., donations welcome. Young Eagles airplane rides available. For more information, contact Scott Gasvoda at 406-590-2836 or Ben Hodgkiss at 406-737-4244.

June 21 - Geraldine Fly-In. 7 to 10 a.m. In conjunction with Geraldine Fun Day. Lots of activities downtown. There will be a fireman's breakfast at the fire station downtown (Check courtesy car availability.) For more Fly-In information, contact Butch Hankins at 406-737-4244. For information on Geraldine Fun Day go to <https://www.geraldineac.com>.

June TBD - Del Bonita Work Session. For more information contact, Stephen Torske at storske@mt.gov.

June 19 - 21 - Round Engine Round-Up. Idaho Falls, Idaho. Wanted: Round engines for the Round Engine Round-Up. Registration by June 1 is mandatory. Meals are limited. Contact Thomas Hoff at galactic@gmail.com if you plan on attending.

June 20 - 22- Fly-In. Annual Missouri Breaks Fly-In. *Sod has been reseeded. Land only on asphalt at Winifred.* The Fly-In starts Friday, June 20 with arrivals in Winifred. Fly out to Missouri Breaks strips, then dinner in Winifred's hangar. Saturday June 21, fly out to Lewistown's MPA Central Hangar Fly In Breakfast, then fly to the Breaks followed by dinner in Winifred. Breakfast in Winifred Sunday, June 22. For more information, contact Ralph Rogers at 406-350-5487.

June 21 - MPA Fly-In and Pancake Breakfast. Lewistown. 7 to 11 a.m. Hosted by the MPA Central Montana Hangar. Once again, we will be serving Jeff and Stacy Martinez's world famous, cinnamon chip pancakes! For more information, contact Pete Smith at 406-366-1435 or pete180@gmail.com.

June 21 - Lincoln Fly-In. Pancake breakfast from 8 to 11 a.m. every third Saturday each month starting May 17 ending September 20. For more information, contact Doug Vulcan at 406-362-4473 or vulcandg406@gmail.com.

June 22 - Big Sandy Fly-In. Pancake breakfast 8 to 11 a.m. Contact Joe Essert at jessert01@gmail.com.

June 26 - 28 ACE Academy. For more information, Contact Barbara Barnum at bbarnum@mt.gov.

June 28 - Canyon Ferry Fly-In. 8 to 11:30 a.m. Please fly your aircraft into Canyon Ferry to support the annual ACE Academy! This is a great opportunity to show off your aircraft and talk to high school students interested in aviation. Students love to hear how you got started in aviation and about your careers in the field. We want you to spend some time with us and talk about the world of aviation. Please RSVP to mdtad@mt.gov or 406-444-2506 if you plan on attending.

July 4 - Plains Fly-in and Paradise Rural Fire Department Pancake Breakfast. Plains Airport. 8 to 11 a.m. Ride an antique fire truck shuttle to the breakfast held at the fire station next door. Contact Randy Garrison at 406-370-6179.

July 12 - Vintage Sea Plane Fly-In. At the Lodge and Resort Lake Mary Ronan. Event starts at 10:30 a.m. Lunch is available for purchase. For more information, or to participate, please contact Addison Pemberton at 509-995-6240 or apemberton@scanivalve.com.

July 12 - 13 - Saint Ignatius Fly-In. Saturday July 12, 4 to 8 p.m., free BBQ with all the fixin's. Sunday, July 13, 8 to 12 p.m., free huckleberry pancake breakfast, 100 gallon avgas giveaway, many door prizes. \$50 per seat helicopter rides both days. For more information, contact Michael Kuefler 406-544-2274.

July 19 - Lincoln Fly-In. Open house, pancake breakfast and potluck lunch. Pancake breakfast from 8 to 11 a.m. followed by a potluck lunch from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, contact Doug Vulcan at 406-362-4473 or vulcandg406@gmail.com.

July 19 - Schafer Meadows Work Party. Work starts at 9 a.m. Dinner provided Saturday night, so come help out and camp for the weekend. For more information, contact Scott Newpower at 406-670-3169.

July 24 - 27 - Big Sky Balloon Rally. Amend Park, Billings. 6 a.m. balloon launches. July 24 through 27. Field opens to the public on July 26 at 6 p.m., live music starts at 6:15. Balloon glow at dusk (weather permitting)! For information, go to <https://www.bigskyballoonrally.com>.

August 1- Montana Antique Aircraft Association (MAAA) Fly-In. Three Forks. Hot breakfast available for purchase from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m., lunch from 11 to 1 p.m. Ping pong ball drop, young eagles discovery flights, flying events with awards, static display with peoples choice award. Dinner available for pilots camping both Friday and Saturday nights. For more information, visit www.montanaantiqueaircraftassociation.com or contact Nick Hunt at 503-209-1041.

August 16 - Lincoln Fly-In. Pancake breakfast from 8 to 11 a.m. every third Saturday each month starting May 17 ending September 20. For more information, contact Doug Vulcan at 406-362-4473 or vulcandg406@gmail.com.

August 23 - Anaconda Bowman Field 9th Annual Fly-In and Car Show. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Free to the public. Flour sack drop, games for the kids, and possible airplane rides (weather permitting). For more information, contact Laura at 406-560-8622.

August 31 - Red Lodge Wings and Wheels. 8 to 11 a.m. Join us for the 3rd annual Wings and Wheels fly-in in conjunction with the Burn the Point car show in Billings and the town of Red Lodge's labor day celebrations. For more information about the fly-in, contact Bo Ewald at b.ewald@att.net.

September 6 - Helena Aviation Day. Helena. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Aircraft static displays, Boeing facility tours, armory and aviation facility open house, events and games for kids. 5K Fun Run starts at 5 p.m. Please RSVP to Scott Sponholz at scott.m.sponholz.mil@army.mil.

September 6- North Central Hanger Fly-In. Havre. 7 to 11 a.m. Breakfast will be served 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. All activities will be completed by 11 a.m. For more information, contact Chad Olsen at 406-945-1577.

September 13 - MPA South Central Fly-in. Laurel. For more information, contact John Roberts at 406-855-2372.

September 20 - Lincoln Fly-In. Pancake breakfast from 8 to 11 a.m. For more information, contact Doug Vulcan at vulcandg406@gmail.com.

MDT Aeronautics Division

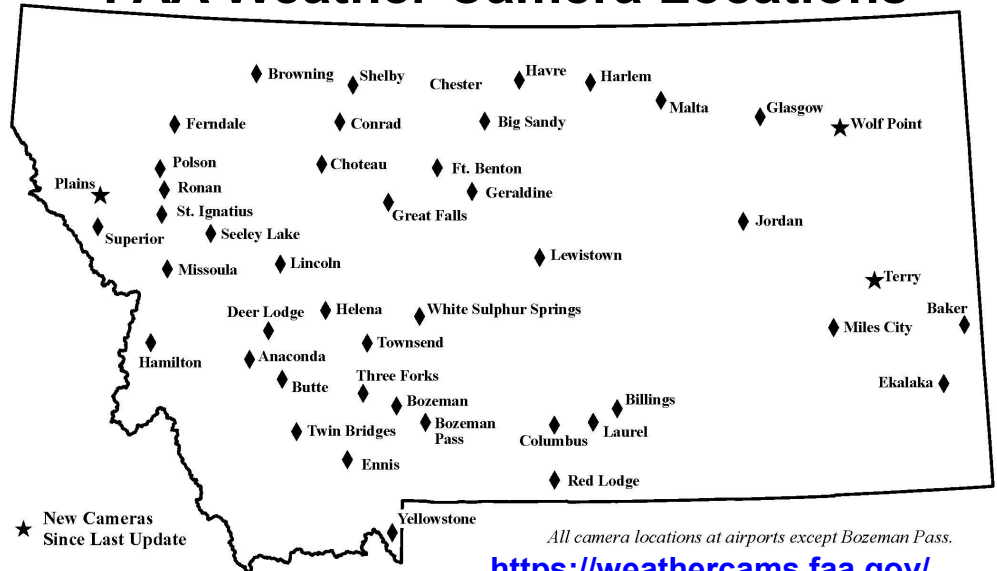
PO Box 200507

2630 Airport Road

**Thank you for
reading
*Montana and
the Sky.*
Fly Safe!**

To manage your *Montana and the Sky* newsletter subscription preferences or to sign-up for the e-newsletter please email mdtad@mt.gov or call 406-444-2506.

FAA Weather Camera Locations



Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided on request. Persons who need an alternative format should contact the Office of Civil Rights, Montana Department of Transportation, 2701 Prospect Avenue, PO Box 201001, Helena, Montana 59620. Telephone 406-444-5416 or Montana Relay Service at 711.

This document is printed at state expense. Information on the cost of producing this publication may be obtained by contacting the Department of Administration.