

Montana and the Sky

Montana Department of Transportation

Aeronautics Division

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Katie Pribyl to Kick off 2026 Montana Aviation Conference as Keynote Speaker



Growing up on a ranch in Montana, Katie didn't have a lot of exposure to aviation. But after flying halfway around the world at the age of 15, she decided she wanted a seat up front. As a high school senior, she took her first flying lesson. Katie went on to earn a degree in aeronautical science from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU). She achieved her dream of becoming an airline pilot at the age of 21 when she was hired to fly the CRJ-200 for Atlantic Coast Airlines/Independence Air.

Katie's career took a turn when the airline she was flying for went out of business in 2005. Her next job was as an aviation data research analyst at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Katie then went to work as the director of communications for General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA) where she acted as the worldwide industry spokesperson for the manufacturers of general aviation airplanes, engines, and avionics.

In 2012, Katie brought her aviation expertise to Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA). Katie started as the Vice President of Communications where she led its media relations group. Katie was also responsible for AOPA's events team which she led through a transition from a single, annual convention to a series of regional fly-ins held across the U.S. that have seen nearly 50,000 attendees.

Katie was promoted to Senior Vice President, Aviation Strategy and Programs in 2016 where she is now responsible for its You Can Fly program and the Air Safety Institute (ASI). Under the You Can Fly umbrella, Katie and her team are building initiatives designed to get lapsed pilots back in the air, provide more affordable access to aviation, support best practices in flight training, and introduce high school students to aviation. The Air Safety Institute produces free programs with the goal of helping pilots fly safer. ASI's resources are accessed more than 2.5 million times each year.

Katie is an active pilot having accumulated more than 4,500 hours of flight time. She is also a certified flight instructor (CFI) and seaplane pilot. She became an aircraft owner in 2014 when she purchased a vintage Cessna 180 which she loves to land at the strip her family added to their Montana ranch.



Farewell, Tim!

The time has come for the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) Aeronautics Division Administrator Tim Conway to retire. After almost 35 years with MDT in multiple professional engineering capacities on the highway side of the business, Tim served as Administrator of the Montana Aeronautics Division since 2018. He first joined the Aeronautics Division in 2012 as the Airports Bureau Chief, transferring from the MDT Consultant Design Bureau. Having a life-long passion for aviation and holding pilot certifications since his college days, the transition to the Aeronautics Division was a dream come true.

Conway was responsible for overseeing airport operations, aviation safety and education programs, statewide aircraft and pilot registration, and coordination of search and rescue efforts.

Conway was dedicated to supporting Montana's aviation infrastructure by working closely with the Aeronautics Board, and played key roles in advancing aviation safety, professional development, creating new infrastructure, and strategic planning for the state's aviation system.

We wish Tim the best in his retirement and if you see his lovely wife out and about, tell her we are sorry he now has so much new found "free time!"



RCMP boosts Canada–U.S. Border Security with a new RPAS corridor Content

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Federal Policing Northwest Region (NWR) is further strengthening the security of the Canada–U.S. border. The RCMP created the Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) and are utilizing it in the NWR corridor.

This border corridor is initially being introduced and trialed in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, to enhance border security and support the safe, coordinated use of drones, or technically named RPAS, within the Canadian airspace at the Canada–U.S. border.

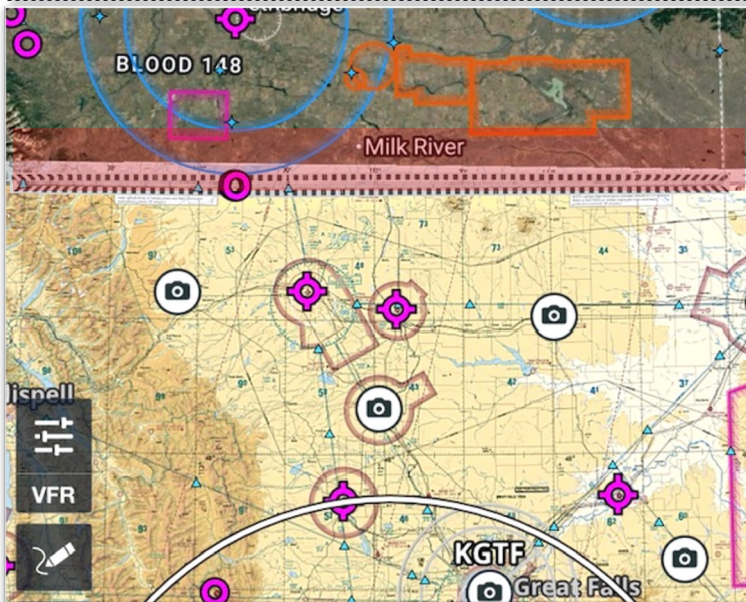
The RPAS corridor, established in collaboration with Transport Canada, will continue to enhance border security by strengthening capacity through intelligence-driven patrols targeting all illegal activity along the border. This includes searching for individuals who illegally enter Canada between official ports of entry and for the human smugglers who facilitate their travel. RPAS patrols will detect and stop illegal smuggling and trafficking of contraband such as illicit drugs.

The RPAS corridor, formally referred to as Advisory Airspace (CYA), does not restrict flight activity. It extends from ground to 500 feet, to 1 Nautical Mile North of the border (1.85 kilometers).

Local pilots, agricultural operators, and recreational aviation users may continue to fly in the area but are asked to exercise increased caution, and to notify the RCMP before entering the corridor. The goal is to strengthen situational awareness, reduce the risk of mid-air conflicts, and enable safer RPAS patrols of Canada's border.

If you plan to fly in the corridor, the RCMP requests that you provide notification in advance, by utilizing any of the below options:

- Use ADS-B Out, a system that transmits your aircraft's location; or, Notify the RCMP in advance of your flight.
- For 24+ hour advance notice:
NWRRPASNWSAT@rcmpgrc.gc.ca
- For short-notice or same-day coordination available 24/7:
Alberta: 1-833-476-4238
Saskatchewan: 1-866-475-4238
Manitoba: 1-888-626-4238



Above: Example of RPAS corridor is highlighted in red. Keep in mind that it may change location and dimension frequently.

Lincoln Airport Gets Upgrade

The Lincoln airport, owned by the MDT Aeronautics Division, built a new snow removal equipment building. The building was funded 90% by FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) grant money and has a general aviation terminal (pilot rest area). The terminal section of the building has a bathroom, shower, sink, and seating area. The building was constructed to house existing snow removal equipment for the airport and a new airport snowplow (also primarily funded with FAA grant money).

The MDT Aeronautics Division owns and/or operates 14 state-owned airports to ensure access, safety, and effective infrastructure for aviation throughout Montana. These airports support public transportation, recreation, emergency services, economic development, and aviation in Montana.



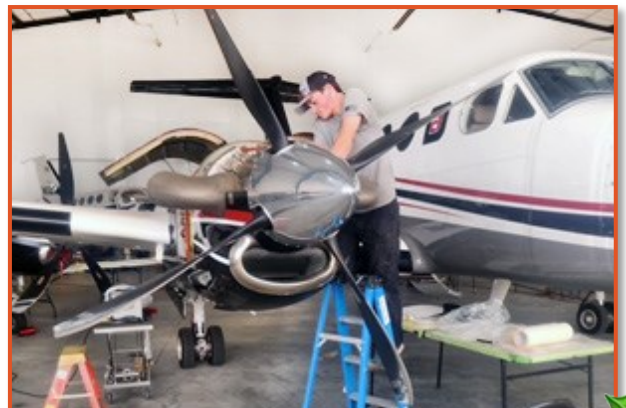
Montanan Becomes Airframe and Powerplant Mechanic

Helena resident TJ Hogan just earned Airframe and Powerplant (A&P) certifications from Helena College. TJ grew up in Billings and is an avid pilot and Civil Air Patrol volunteer. He worked under Leonard Patton in his maintenance shop before moving to Helena to pursue A&P certifications.

TJ is now offering mobile aircraft maintenance, detailing, and recovery services throughout the region. He has plans to expand into flight instruction and ferry flight operations soon.

TJ holds multiple pilot endorsements and completed spin training with Don Hendrickson in his Citabria, Dusty. His passion for aviation is rooted in family—his grandfather was a Marine Corps and airline pilot.

For more information, visit hoganaviationmt.com.





2026 Flight Instructor Refresher Clinic

You do not have to be a flight instructor to attend

The Montana Aeronautics Flight Instructor Refresher Clinic (FIRC) is an annual FAA-approved course designed to help certified flight instructors (CFIs) renew their instructor certificates and stay current with the latest in aviation training and safety practices.

The 2026 clinic will be in Helena at the Doubletree Hotel February 6 - 7, 2026, from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. both days.

Registration and Tuition

- Tuition is \$75, with a \$25 discount for pilots registered in Montana.
- Montana pilot registration is available for \$10 per year, providing tuition savings and supporting state aviation programs.
- Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis, and non-instructors and students are encouraged.

For more information, contact Matt Lindberg at 406-444-2506 or mdtad@mt.gov.

To register, scan the QR Code:

Lodging is available at the Doubletree by Hilton located at 22 N Last Chance Gulch.

Call (406)443-2200 and mention FIRC for the state rate.



2026 Montana Aviation Conference Registration Open



The Aviation Organization of Montana (AOM) is pleased to announce the 41st Montana Aviation Conference will be held in Billings February 26-28, 2026, at the Billings Hotel and Convention Center.

The conference offers three days of speakers, seminars, workshops, awards ceremonies, business meetings, comradery, and social events. It is an opportunity for those from the aviation community to connect, learn, and exchange ideas and information.

Around 500 participants are expected this year.

If you are interested in saving money on your registration fees, check out the "take off to landing" package on the registration website and register by January 31, 2026!

Lodging is available at a special rate by calling the Billings Hotel and Convention Center in Billings at 406-248-7151. Mention the Montana Aviation Conference for discounted room rates. Hotel room

reservations must be made before January 1, 2026, to get the event rate.

For more information, contact the MDT Aeronautics Division at 406-444-2506 or email katkins@mt.gov.

Vendor and attendee conference registration is open and may be completed by scanning the QR code:



Calendar of Events

December 1- Aircraft and pilot registration renewals for 2026 opens. For more information or questions, feel free to contact us at 406-444-2506 or mdtad@mt.gov.

January 9 -11 Winter Survival Clinic. Sugarloaf Lodge, Anaconda. For more information, contact Barbara Barnum at 406-444-2506 or mdtad@mt.gov.

January 28 - 29 Aeronautics Loan and Grant Board Meeting. Helena. MDT Headquarters in the East and West Auditorium. For more information, contact Stephen Torske at 406-444-2506 or storske@mt.gov.

February 6 - 7 FIRC. Helena. Double Tree by Hilton. For more information contact Matt Lindberg at 406-444-2506 or mlindberg@mt.gov.

February 26 - 28 - Montana Aviation Conference. Billings. Billings Hotel and Convention Center. For more information, to volunteer or be a vender at the conference, please contact Kelly Atkins at 406-444-9580 or email katkins@mt.gov.

March 1st- Aircraft and pilot registration renewals for 2026 are due.

MDT Aeronautics Division

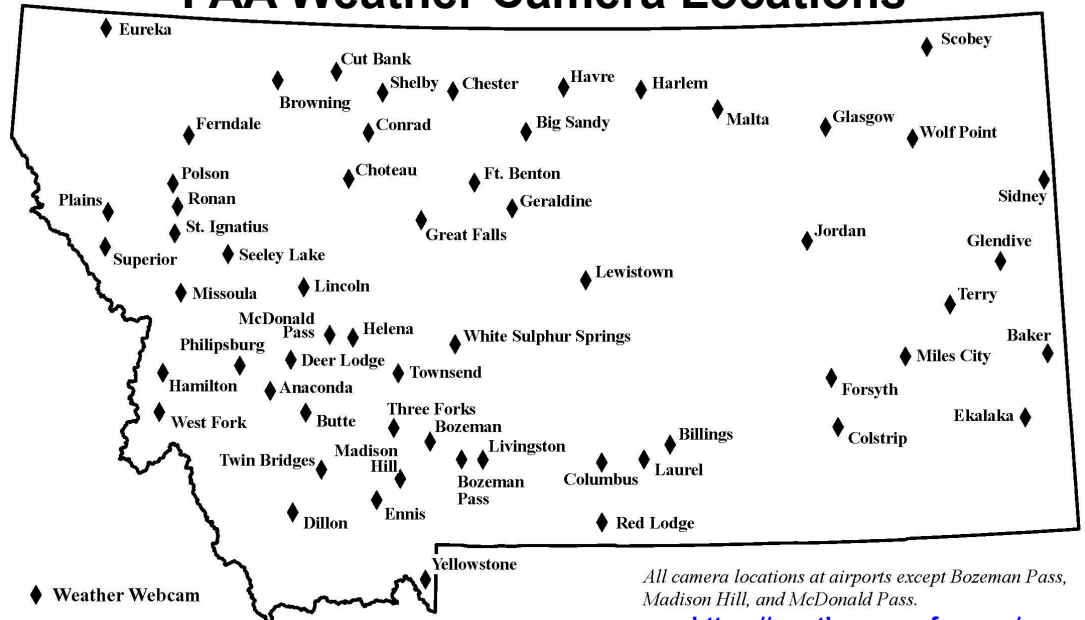
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FAA Weather Camera Locations



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