



Montana and the Sky

Montana Department of Transportation

Aeronautics Division

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41st Annual Montana Aviation Conference

The 41st Annual Montana Aviation Conference, hosted by the Aviation Organizations of Montana (AOM), touched down in Billings February 26 to 28, 2026, at the Billings Hotel and Convention Center. Montana's premier aviation gathering once again brought together pilots, mechanics, airport sponsors, industry partners, and aviation enthusiasts for three full days of learning, networking, and celebration.

This year's program featured a packed exhibit hall, keynote luncheons and banquets, and multiple concurrent sessions covering safety, medicine, regulations, backcountry flying, search and rescue, and stories from across Montana's aviation community. The conference also continued its strong emphasis on workforce development, with more than \$63,000 in Montana aviation scholarships presented to students, pilots, and mechanics during the awards luncheon. Additionally, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) presented five Wright Brothers Master Pilot Awards and one Charles Taylor Master Mechanic Awards celebrating 50 years of flying or being an aircraft mechanic!

A highlight for mechanics was the MDT Aeronautics Division's long running Mechanic Refresher and Inspection Authorization (IA) Renewal Seminar, held in conjunction with the conference on Friday and Saturday. Mechanics attended to meet their annual IA renewal requirements - continuing a tradition that began in 1963, when Montana became the first state to offer a state sponsored IA renewal course.

Social events and static displays rounded out the schedule, giving attendees time to connect, share ideas, and explore aircraft and services supporting aviation across the state. As always, the conference underscored aviation's critical role in connecting Montana communities and highlighted the partnerships that keep the state's airports, operators, and airways safe and thriving.

The 42nd annual Montana Aviation Conference will be held in Missoula next year.



Wright Brothers Awards

Gary Kauffman
Tim Linn
Leonard Patton
Wayne Sand
Every Wierda

Charles Taylor Award

Eugene Allard



Photo courtesy of Cindy Fouhy





Summer Work Sessions



Backcountry airstrip work sessions are a hands on way to help maintain Montana's public-use strips while enjoying time with fellow pilots and aviation enthusiasts. Typical projects include filling gopher holes, mowing, painting, weeding, replacing windsocks, cutting and stacking firewood, repairing fences, and other light maintenance that keeps these airstrips safe and welcoming for all users.

Volunteers are encouraged to bring work gloves and basic hand tools and if you want, bring your camping gear! These work sessions are also a great opportunity to camp out, swap flying stories, help improve some special recreational airstrips, and learn more about backcountry operations from experienced Montana pilots.

*Please note that the Spotted Bear work session weekend has been shifted in recent years to improve the chances of favorable weather compared to the legacy weekend. As always, all events are weather dependent, so check with Scott before you launch.



For more information, to confirm weather, and what to bring contact Scott Newpower at snewpower@theraf.org.



The following work sessions are scheduled for this summer:

- June 13 – Spotted Bear Work Session (8U4) 8 a.m. - Lunch will be provided.
- June 20 – Meadow Creek Work Session (0S1) 8 a.m. – If you're handy with a chainsaw, please bring one; there is usually plenty of downed timber to cut and stack. Lunch will be provided.
- July 19 – Schafer Meadows Work Session (8U2) 8 a.m. – Manual tools only in the wilderness area. Dinner will be provided.

\$10,000 Airport Courtesy Car Grant Open

The Airport Courtesy Car Application period is open from April 1 to May 31. There are three reimbursement grants of up to \$10,000 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.

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

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



New AOM Leadership

New Aviation Organizations of Montana (AOM) officers were elected during its winter board meeting at the Montana Aviation Conference. After many years of leadership and conference planning, Mike Vivion stepped down.

Thank you for many great conferences, Mike!

Justin Zindell of the Montana Airport Management Association (MAMA) is the new president, Wade Cebulski of the Montana Pilots Association (MPA) is the new vice president, and Tammy Kantorowicz of the MPA remains the treasure and secretary.

The AOM represents 9 aviation organizations in Montana and is the host and sponsor of the annual Montana Aviation Conference. If you want to get involved with the AOM and conference planning, please contact Justin at justin.zindell@kljeng.com.

2026 Aviation Awareness Art Contest

The MDT Aeronautics Division's Aviation Awareness Art Contest allows students to broaden their knowledge and promote interest in careers within the aviation. The contest is open to all students in K - 12 in public, private, and home schools. Students should research aviation in Montana and then illustrate a subject of their choosing.

Submissions will be accepted until April 10th.
Artwork must have a Montana aviation theme.
For more details and to download the full flyer, go to

mdt.mt.gov/aviation/events.aspx
or scan the QR Code.



For further information, please contact Barbara Barnum 406-444-2506 or bbarnum@mt.gov

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.



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.

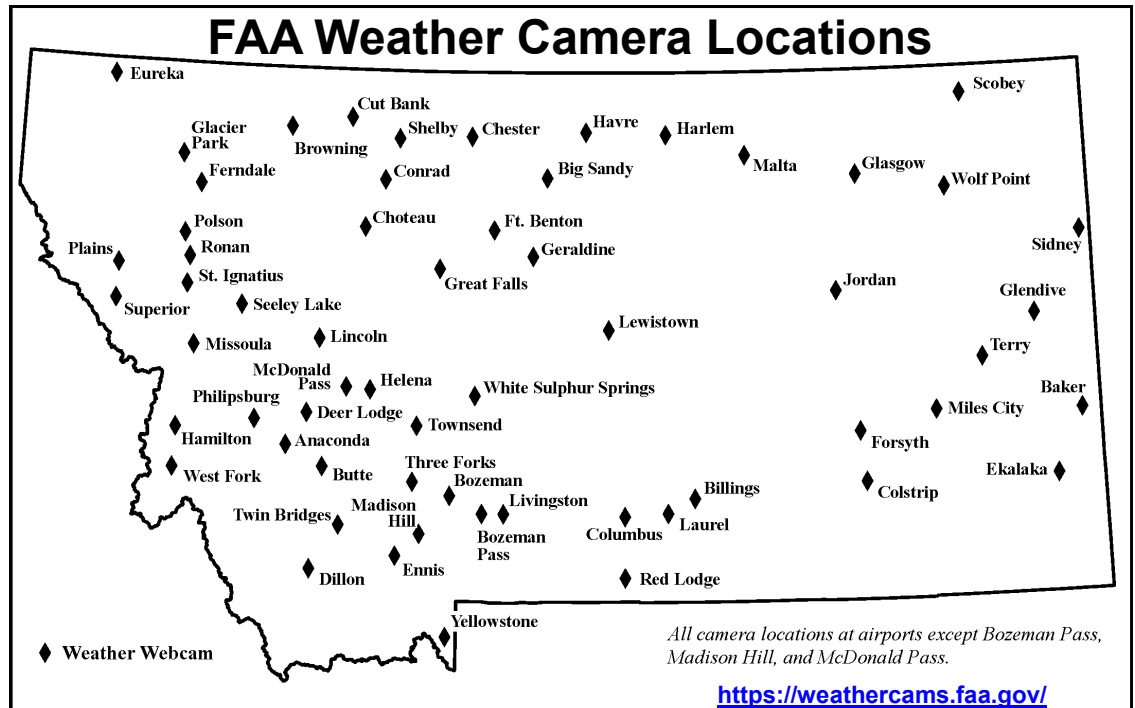
Calendar of Events

- April 9 - Blackfoot Aviation. Missoula. GA Seminars - Montana Accident Case Studies** with speaker Jeff Vercoe. (FAA Safety with WINGS credit). Starts 6:30 p.m. at hanger #3 of the East LZ hangers. 4198 Corporate Way. For more information, contact Kendon Campbell at kendonc@blackfootaviation.net or 406-519-3757.
- April 10 - Aviation Art Contest submission deadline.**
- April 18 - Helena Airport.** Montana EAA chapter 344 will be hosting a free Young Eagles Flight Event for youth ages 8 to 17. 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. For on-line registration, go eaa.org/eaa/youth/free-ye-flights or contact Dave Lehman at vechapter344@earthlink.net.
- May 14 - Blackfoot Aviation. Missoula. GA Seminars - Density Altitude/Aircraft Performance** with speaker Kurt Kleiner. (FAA Safety with WINGS credit). Starts 6:30 p.m. at hanger #3 of the East LZ hangers. 4198 Corporate Way. For more information, contact Kendon Campbell at kendonc@blackfootaviation.net or 406-519-3757.
- May 15 - 17 - Cub Doctor. Roundup.** Clyde Smith Jr. aka "The Cub Doctor" returns to Montana for his Fabric Piper Restoration and Maintenance Workshop Seminar. Will be held at Bar T Aero Hangar #15 (RPX) in Roundup. For more information, and to register, contact Clint Worman at gccranch@rangeweb.net. *Limited seating available so call ASAP!*
- May 16 - Lincoln Fly-In.** The Lincoln Airport Foundation will be hosting a pancake breakfast from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. For more information, contact Doug Vulcan at 406-362-4473 or vulcandg406@gmail.com.
- May 29 - 31 - Stillwater Balloon Rally. Columbus.** Wolterman Memorial Airport, 602 E 8th Ave. For more information, contact Lisa Westervelt at 406-322-4302 or lwestervelt@columbusfirerescue.com.
- May 30 - John Beer Memorial Poker Run. Columbus.** Breakfast starts at 8 a.m., card draw and activities at 10 a.m. and lunch at 12 p.m. Coolest airplane contest, kids paper airplane contest and 5 card poker. For more information, contact Carter Beer at 406-855-3200.
- May 30 - EAA Chapter 344 Pancake Breakfast. Helena.** Starts at 7:30 a.m. at Morrison Park located on the Southwest corner of Helena Airport near Sky Service. Breakfast by donation, Young Eagles Flights, and aircraft on display. For more information contact Brenna Youmans at 970-286-4220.
- June TBD - Del Bonita Work Session.** For more information contact, Stephen Torske at storske@mt.gov.
- June 13 - Butte Wings and Wheels Fly-In or Drive-In.** 8 a. m. to 10 a.m. For more information, contact Walt McIntosh at 406-670-1846.
- June 13 - Townsend Fly-In.** Sponsored by the Broadwater County Airport Board. Breakfast served for a fee and proceeds go to the local 4H club. For more information, contact Jess Lancello at 406-860-5355 or jessarnold@hotmail.com.
- June 13 - Spotted Bear Work Party.** For more information, contact Scott Newpower at 406-670-3169 or snewpower@theraf.org.
- June 20 - Geraldine Fly-In.** 7 a.m. 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 geraldineac.com.
- June 20 - Meadow Creek Work Party.** For more information, contact Scott Newpower at 406-670-3169 or snewpower@theraf.org.
- June 20 - Big Timber Fly-In and Car Show.** Breakfast starts at 7 a. m. followed by a pig roast lunch starting at 10 a.m. Breakfast and lunch are free. Donations accepted. For more information, contact Kirk Bryan at 406-930-1780.
- June 20 - Canyon Ferry Fly-In.** 8 a.m. 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. Please RSVP to Barbara Barnum at bbarnum@mt.gov.
- June 26 - 28 - Fly-In. Annual Missouri Breaks Fly-In.** The Fly-In starts Friday, June 26 with arrivals in Winifred. Fly out to Missouri Breaks strips, then dinner in Winifred's hangar. Saturday June 27, 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 28. For more information, contact Ralph Rogers at 406-350-5487.
- June 27 - MPA Central Montana Fly-In. Lewistown.** 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. Hosted by the MPA Central Montana Hangar. We will be serving scrambled eggs, sausage and 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 27 - Choteau Fly-In.** 6:30 a.m. 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.
- July 11 - 12 - Saint Ignatius Fly-In.** Saturday, July 11, 4 a.m. to 8 p.m., free BBQ with all the fixin's. Sunday, July 12, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., free huckleberry pancake breakfast, 100 gallon avgas giveaway, many door prizes. Helicopter rides both days. For more information, contact Michael Kuefler 406-544-2274.
- July 19 - Schafer Meadows Work Party.** For more information, contact Scott Newpower at 406-670-3169 or snewpower@theraf.org.
- July 23 - 26 - Big Sky Balloon Rally. Billings.** For event information go to, bigskyballoonrally.com.
- August 9 - Hysham Fly-In.** Breakfast available for a small donation 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. For more information, contact Ruth Baue at 406-342-5328.
- September 12 - North Central Hanger Fly-In. Havre.** 7 a.m. 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 19 - MPA South Central Fly-In. Laurel.** For more information, contact John Roberts at 406-855-2372.
- September 19 - Lincoln Fly-In.** The Lincoln Airport Foundation will be hosting a pancake breakfast from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. For more information, contact Doug Vulcan at 406-362-4473 or vulcandg406@gmail.com.

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