

AMAA NEWSLETTER

“Professional Aerial Applicators Providing Crop Protection Products and Services to Production Agriculture Across Montana”

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A S S O C I A T I O N O F M O N T A N A A E R I A L A P P L I C A T O R S

President’s Message

Hello to everyone. Hopefully spring has found you wherever you are, or something that resembles it anyway. In our corner of the woods, we have had more “winter” weather in the last couple weeks than we had all winter. We are happy for the moisture though, and it is finally starting to look like it normally does this time of year. The AMAA had its spring board meeting this last week and we had a few topics of discussion that affect us all. The Montana Department of Agriculture has a couple things currently going on that will directly influence all of our members. First, they are in the process of re-writing the Ag Plant Pest manual that we all had to study to get our applicator licenses. The Department of Ag asked us if we would like to help with the re-write, so Mike Campbell and Darrin Pluhar are working with them on that. The second topic the MT Department of Ag is working on is the current standard of financial responsibility that is required of applicators in MT. Currently all that is required is a \$1500 bond for aerial applicators. This rule will sunset in 2019 and they have asked us what our thoughts are on a new standard of financial responsibility. What we don’t want is for the environmentalist to step in and make the suggestion for us, so we need to align our current policy closer to what other states have adopted to avoid having some burdensome regulations put in place by people that have no familiarity with our industry.

Another topic of discussion was going over the financials of the organization, and what they show is somewhat disheartening. I’ll save you all the details, but the basic trend is that the association is operating at a loss. What this means, is that we need to find ways to improve our economic standing. This can be done in several ways, including

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2018 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Patrick Stromberg
President

Clear Skies Aviation, INC
112 Marhya RD
Reserve MT 59258
701.330.0292

patrickstromberg@hotmail.com

Bruce Downs
Past President

Downs Farm INC
PO Box 131
Lindsay MT 59339
406.584.7462

sunny@midrivers.com

Darrin Pluhar
NAAA Representative

Plu's Flying Service INC
PO Box 133
Ekalaka MT 59324
406.853.0039

pluflyinc@mcn.net

Matt Lutz

Taylor Aviation, INC
PO Box 159
Fort Benton MT 59442
406.350.0498

lutzmatt@rocketmail.com

Mike Campbell

Campbell Aviation INC
1891 23rd LN NE
Dutton MT 59433
406.463.2268

eccampbell@yahoo.com

Dave Bright

Taylor Aviation, INC
PO Box 10006
Kalispell MT 59904
406.250.8953

brightat602@gmail.com

Greg Smith
Vice President

Skyline Aviation
410 Skyline Drive
Lewistown, MT 59457
406.350.0251

gsmith@skylineav.com

Tater Erickson
Allied Member

Dupont Crop Protection
PO Box 233
Hobson MT 59452
406.366.1287

shawn.a.erickson@dupont.com

Rob Nicholson
Secretary-Treasurer

Slipstream Solutions LLC
PO Box 12
Manhattan MT 59741
406.369.2878

C12robert.nicholson@gmail.com

Wacey Cathey

Black Gulch Aviation
33627 Marion Lane
Polson, MT 59860
406.671.3646

catheyflyin@gmail.com

Colleen Campbell
Executive Director

1891 23rd Lane NE
Dutton MT 59433
406.463.2268

eccampbell@yahoo.com

recruiting new membership, more active participation in the spray clinics, changing the membership dues (which we voted to leave the same for now) or some other inspirational activity that can generate revenue. We need every member that we have and then some to continue to support the AMAA and ensure that we can continue to fund the organization. If the trend continues, it may eventually become likely that we will have to join with another states organization to help offset the losses. It is my personal opinion that I would really rather not travel outside the state to attend PAASS or get points for my license, so we need everyone's support to keep that from happening.

The last subject I wanted to touch on with spring fast approaching is something that I ponder about every year, and that is what I can do better this year than last year. I like to think that I have a pretty good handle on things, but there is always room for improvement. For instance, my record keeping gets a little sloppy when things get hectic. I get all the technically required info written down somewhere but it sometimes takes a while to sort it out after the fact, so I'm really going to work on that this year. Another thing I want to improve on is communication with the customer on job progress. It's really easy to assume that they know you can't fly when it's raining or the wind is blowing 40mph, but they don't always pay attention to the weather like we do and just assume you got it done, which can cause friction later on when they realize it's not done yet. I'm sure we've all run into this at some point, but my goal is to keep all the current customers on the list properly notified of any change in the schedule. I've learned that if you keep them up to date, they are generally pretty understanding. These are just a couple examples of things I am going to work on, but I can almost guarantee that we all have something we can improve on.

With that, I'd like to wish everybody a safe and prosperous year, and as always if any of you have comments or concerns, feel free to contact myself or any of the other board members with your thoughts. Fly safe and be happy ;)

Regards

Patrick Stromberg

Congratulations to **Justin Ferguson** and **Russell Ferguson** of Yellowstone Air Service, recipients of the 2018 Mike Biggerstaff Eagle Award. Justin and Russell were charter members of the AMAA and both served on the board of directors, leading and guiding the state's aerial applicators through the ever changing industry. Thank you, gentleman!



Congratulations and a big thank you to **Paul Newby**, Agwagons, INC of Bozeman. Paul is a retired aerial applicator who has served on the AMAA board of directors for longer than this editor has been involved. He has done a great job as the Secretary/Treasurer. Because of his busy retirement life and the need to focus on a local project closer to home, Paul chose to relinquish his position on the board. Paul is also a photographer extraordinaire and has pledged to continue working with us during Operation SAFE clinics, catching perfect still shots of spray patterns.



UPCOMING EVENTS

- ⇒ AMAA Fall Board Meeting
October 25, 2018,
Venue TBD
- ⇒ NAAA Ag Aviation Expo
December 3-6, 2018
Reno, Nevada
- ⇒ AMAA Convention and Trade
Show, January 20-22, 2019
Great Falls, MT



During spring board meetings this past February, NAAA awarded Dana Ness a lifetime membership. During the AMAA's spring board meeting in March, our board followed suit. Not only was Dana a great aerial applicator but he was a strong leader of the industry as a whole. If you'd like to send a card, flowers, small gift or notes of encouragement here is Dana's current address:

Dana Ness, Liberty County Nursing Home
PO Box 705
Chester, MT 59522



Due to time constraints, Greg Smith was unable to provide an article about his experience in the NAAA's Leadership Training Program but we know he excelled. This training will benefit everyone in the agricultural aviation business!



2018 AMAA MEMBERSHIP

- Operator Members—23
- Pilot Members—9
- Retired Members—5
- Allied Members—6
- Life Time Member—1

Welcome to new members, Wesley Mulder and Nathan Simonson!



Wilbur-Ellis Announces 2018 Program for Aerial Applicators

Wilbur-Ellis donated \$704 to the AMAA for our membership's use of Crosshair in 2017. The 2018 program includes \$1.00 of every gallon of Crosshair as well as \$8.00 of every gallon of Guidance aerially applied by our membership. These funds will be donated back to the association and given to us during the 2019 convention.

Thank you Wilbur-Ellis!

2018 NAAA Spring Board Meeting Report

The NAAA recently held their Spring Board Meeting in Washington, DC on February 15th – 17th. It was a busy three days for state representatives from all across the US discussing and dealing with the issues affecting the aerial application industry. Following is a brief summary:

On Thursday morning, I went up to Capitol Hill and had the pleasure of meeting with Senator Daines and Congressman Gianforte, separately, in person. It was the first time I had met either of them, so I took the opportunity to express the aerial application industries concerns with NPDES, WOTUS, UAV's and implementing the new tower marking law. Concerning the NPDES permit exemption, Sen. Daines, who sits on the Senate Ag. Committee, stated that the best way to assure that happens is to get the wording attached to the Farm Bill which he will do what he can to see it through. After explaining our stance on the tower marking issue where we wished Congress would just implement the existing law that was supposed to go into effect in July of 2017, Rep. Gianforte requested I put together a letter on my company letterhead explaining how these unlit and unmarked towers directly affect the safety of my operation as well as all other aerial applicators and send it to him, which I did shortly afterwards. From there, he would attach his own cover letter and send it to the appropriate people who serve on the influential committees that can make it happen, a process that Rep. Gianforte said has created positive results in the past. I also covered with both gentlemen the importance of maintaining the current aircraft depreciation schedule and our exemption from user fees and aviation gasoline excise taxes, all of which could be affected by trimming the budget.

Thursday afternoon, the early sessions began, where I serve on the Program Development Comm. (PDC), which is an extended brain storming session where we come up with ideas and create the PAASS program modules for the upcoming 2018-19 season. Operation SAFE committee also meets right afterwards where we discuss the new advances and innovations in the aircraft pattern analysis process.

The General Session opened once again with Richard Keigwin, EPA's acting director of the Office of Pesticide Programs, giving us an update of the current events within his agency. The updated Pesticide Registration Improvement Act (PRIA 4), which establishes the process for which products go through for registration, is currently held up in the Senate; therefore, the PRIA 3 expiration date was extended through March 23, 2018. This has created some uncertainty of how soon the reregistration of existing products (required every 15 years) up for renewal and the registration of new products will be completed. Glyphosate and neonicotinoids are two of the main actives up for re-registration in 2018.

Concerning the new rules for WPS that went into effect in January of this year, EPA has determined (due to feedback from many in our industry and others) that further consideration of minimum age, designated representative and application exclusion zones (AEZ) is warranted and they will look for input on potential revisions.

As far as the new certification rules, the original effective date of March 4, 2017 has been moved several times. Each state has until March 4, 2020 to submit a revised certification plan demonstrating their compliance with the new rules. The existing plans remain in effect until the EPA approves the new revisions. The time frame for implementation and compliance with the revised

certification plan will be decided on a case-by-case basis as part of EPA's review and approval of each state certification plan.

Andrew Moore, NAAA's Executive Director, opened the General Session by highlighting the main challenges facing our industry:

- ⇒ Eco-activists evangelizing to an agenda driven media and misinformed public resulting in unsound scientific and economic policy in the form of enacted ballot initiatives and lawsuits against Administration policy decisions.
- ⇒ Federal debt issues of almost \$21 trillion will continue to weigh on Ag aviation which could affect the status of user fees, research funding, tax exemptions, etc.
- ⇒ Growing broadband market and communications industry will lead to a growth in towers, raising more safety concerns.
- ⇒ UAVs still pose growing safety fears as the FAA is in love with the technology and Congress is not willing to take on the UAV recreation lobby.
- ⇒ Ensure global markets remain available and grow Ag trade. Commodity prices remain a concern.

Positively promoting the aerial application industry continued to be a high priority of the NAAA in 2017 as evidenced by: the "Find an Aerial Applicator Near You" feature on the website; the "Above All Forms of Crop Care" advertising that appeared in CropLife magazine and adding Farm Journal magazine and Agweb; plus advocating and recruiting for the industry at Air Venture in Osh Kosh.

Andrew left us with his insight to the future outlook of the aerial application industry:

The good news for agriculture food production and aerial application continues to be:

- The global economic growth is forecast to average 3.5% annually over the next ten years.
- 2018 US Exports are forecast to increase largely due to the decline of the dollar vs other currencies.
- Population growth will increase from 7.2 billion today to 8.1 billion by 2025 (~10 billion by 2050).
- Significant growth in the world's middle class means greater food demands and US Ag exports.
- Crop protection products market will continue to grow to meet the global food demand.

Following is a brief summary of some of the main topics discussed in committee meetings:

Government Relations covered a lot of topics of interest. As mentioned earlier, Congress approved the FAA Extension Bill in July 2016 which included the tower marking and database requirements for ALL towers 50 to 200 feet tall with a base less than 10 feet in diameter. The FAA has failed to meet the July 2017 deadline to implement the new rule to require the marking (paint, balls and sleeves) and to develop a database that shows all such towers. Included in the language is an exemption for any such towers in urban areas and within the footprint of a farmyard, business or other such facility. This law is currently "frozen", resulting in its implementation being delayed.

Since the passage, The Wireless Industries Assoc. and the National Assoc. of Broadcasters has pushed back against the FAA with an argument that not all towers should need to be marked to such an extent as intended. Instead of standing their ground and upholding the law as passed, the FAA has caved and encouraged the NAAA to reconsider how towers should be marked. NAAA is currently reviewing possible alternative marking options with the FAA but has made it clear we don't really care how much it costs THEM to mark their towers if it saves pilots lives.

Concerning the Waters of the US (WOTUS), in January the Supreme Court ruled that the legal challenges of the Clean Water Rule (CWR) of 2015 should not have been brought to Circuit Courts, and the suits filed in federal district courts were proper. To keep it simple, what this means is that it is anticipated that any potential implementation of the CWR will be halted soon by the district courts, or through EPA/Corps regulatory action, or both. The EPA and the Corps are expected to issue their proposed replacement WOTUS rule sometime in the spring/summer of 2018.

Another concerning topic that came up in Communications, and among some of the other committees, was the increase in "false comparisons" of certain companies, and even some university studies that show a "lack" of coverage provided by aerial applications vs the "better" coverage provided by ground applications. Many of these "studies" and ads tried to justify their conclusions based mainly on the visual perception of what the water sensitive cards looked like, without disclosing the who, what, where and when of the applications such as GPA's, amounts of product that reached the plants and overall efficacy. Needless to say, Dr. Scott Bretthauer was more than happy to set the record straight and form a response by the NAAA to shoot down these un-scientific studies with actual data collected over the years from results that he and many analysts have compiled over the years. Bottom line, our industry must fight for its reputation and not let the facts get manipulated in print and power points that try to manipulate the producers (and public) with FAKE NEWS!

In the Insurance Committee, we discussed how the FAA is encouraging our industry to develop more structured standards for initial testing and recurrency for aerial applicators, based on the NTSB conclusions drawn from their study in 2014 of our accident history. From our standpoint, as an industry, we would rather develop a program to encourage and reward participation, rather than have the FAA mandate it for us. One idea is to come up with a professional designation for aerial applicators based on meeting additional standards towards recertification and recurrency training. The NAAREF Board has created a special committee composed of professionals from all across our industry to look into how best to accomplish this goal, which I have volunteered to be a part of.

The main topic of focus in Safety & Regs was the 69 accidents and 7 fatalities that our industry suffered in 2017, both of which are close to the 10 year average for Part 137. A special committee was formed a couple years ago to study these accidents and come up with a "Root Cause" in which some interesting stats have surfaced involving Ag aviation accidents, **REGARDLESS OF TOTAL AND AG TIME:**

- ⇒ 75% involve pilots with less than 500 hours in make and model
- ⇒ 43% involve pilots with less than 250 hours ag
- ⇒ 50% involve pilots with less than 100 hours in the last 90 days.

The NAAA is already planning the 2018 Convention to be held Dec. 3-6th in Reno, NV. We will have a new venue from past years in Reno, as the Atlantis Hotel will serve as our host, located next to the convention center which promises to make it much more convenient for everyone. Due to the popularity, the NAAA block of hotel rooms will fill up fast so don't wait until this fall to make reservations. Visit the NAAA website agaviation.org for more details and to make reservations.

That is a pretty condensed version of the committees I was a part of. There are well over 20 committees that meet during the board meetings, so I would encourage everyone to visit the NAAA website for a more detailed look at what was covered and to keep up on the current events happening within the industry.

As you just read, NAAA is working hard for the aerial application industry and the vital role it plays in meeting the demand for food, fuel, fiber and forestry across the United States and around the World. Recently, you should have received a reminder to renew your NAAA membership. If you have never been a member of the NAAA, I'd like you to consider all that they do to support your livelihood. Here are some things to consider that various membership categories have to offer:

Operator: Accelerated Depreciation

Fuel Tax Savings; Avgas: $\$.19/\text{gal} \times 30 \text{ GPH} \times 250 \text{ Hrs.} = \$1425/\text{Season} (\$6/\text{HR})$

Jet A: $\$.23/\text{gal} \times 55 \text{ GPH} \times 250 \text{ Hrs.} = \$3162/\text{Season} (\$13/\text{HR})$

Average cost of membership: **1 cent per acre!**

Affiliated Operator: Includes Partners, Branch Managers, etc.

Insight to issues affecting our industry.

Tools to run a safer, more efficient business.

(Digital magazine, website, e newsletter, media relations kit, bill stuffers)

Pilots: Better informed with industry insight through digital magazine and website.

Safety awareness through weekly Fly Safe Campaign notices.

Adds credibility and shows professionalism to current and future operators.

Support: Includes spouses and significant others.

Helps them to understand the aerial application environment and your place in it.

Gets them involved in the promotion of our industry thru education, tradeshow, etc.

And to those of you who are NAAA members, as Bartels and James used to say:

“Thanks For Your Support!”

Here's hoping you have a safe and productive year. And remember, take time each day to step back, appreciate and think about all of your family and friends that count on you to make it back home safely!

Fly Smart! Stay Safe!

Darrin

2018 EXHIBITORS AND SPONSORS

AEROTRONICS—Steve Vold 406-259-5006

ARYSTA LIFESCIENCE—Craig Codr 406-780-0265 and Rick Liesener

BASF—Chris Berg 406-210-4460

BAYER CROP SCIENCE—Justin Nielson 605-222-2476

CHEM-MAN—John Farris, Lisa Hedge 870-275-2712

CITY SERVICE VALCON—Eddie Anderson 406-250-9225

CROP PRODUCTION SERVICE—Isaac Salcido 406-217-3268

CROSS PETROLEUM SERVICE—Greg Cross/Larry Taylor/ Craig Stebbins 406-377-8325

DOW AGROSCIENCES—Seth Keas 785-737-6234, Alison Anderson 662-416-8280,
Trent Brusseau 208-318-8877

DUPONT CROP PROTECTION—Tater Erickson, 406-366-1287

DYNANAV SYSTEMS, INC—Reg Moen/Giovanni Luigi 604-313-0745

HELENA CHEMICAL COMPANY—Brooks Hammel 406-628-8768, Paul Olson 406-262-3737,

MONSANTO—Kerry Yates 406-788-4215

MOUNTAIN AIR INSURANCE—Ken Brion/Pete Brion 406-363-1411

NORTHWEST PROPELLER—Dick and Martha Jacob 253-770-7400

OMAHA AIRPLANE SUPPLY—Rich Broberg 800-228-9400

PICKETT EQUIPMENT COMPANY—Bailey Everett 901-494-1937

QUEEN BEE AIR SPECIALTIES—Chip Kemper/Steve Willey 208-745-7654

REGAL AVIATION INSURANCE—Rusty Wissmiller/Jason Wissmiller 800-275-7345

SKY TRACTOR SUPPLY—Peg Klemetson 701-436-5880

SYNGENTA—Johnnie Scott 406-453-5004

TRACMAP—Mark Hornback 888-656-6135

TULSA AIRCRAFT ENGINES—Rex Vaughan 918-838-8532

US BANK—Brent Leischner 406-232-0810

WILBUR-ELLIS COMPANY—Rob Warehime. Rick Anderson, Craig Cheetham 406-727-4500

THANK YOU!

AMAA MEMBERSHIP

MEMBER	EMAIL	PHONE
Sid Brandon	skb@northerntel.net	406-336-2110
Stacy Bellamy	sb6545@aol.com	406-570-6325
Doug Bouma	dandkag@3rivers.net	406-590-1266
Dave Bright	brightat602@gmail.com	406-250-8953
Mike Campbell	eccampbell@yahoo.com	406-476-3332
Wacey Cathey	catheyflyin@gmail.com	406-671-3646
Bruce Downs	sunny@midrivers.com	406-584-7462
Justin Ferguson	yas@mtintouch.net	406-932-4389
Russell Ferguson	russferguson@hotmail.com	406-222-6504
Cody Folkvord	headwatersfs@gmail.com	406-439-4179
Bill Galt	bill@galtranch.com	406-547-2107
Bill Harris	harrisbill50@gmail.com	406-485-3672
Dave Harris	djharris@midrivers.com	406-485-3672
John Hebbleman	jhfly455d@hotmail.com	406-357-4233
Andrew Heppe	a_heppe@hotmail.com	406-546-7401
Dixon Hitch	hitchav@mtintouch.net	406-654-1143
Garfield Jermunson	garfield1@bresnan.net	406-727-5056
Kendall Johnson	weeds@nemont.net	406-653-1740
Mike Ley	ley.classic@gmail.com	406-788-3022
Roger Lincoln	rmbalinc@ttc-cmc.net	406-355-4943
Matt Lutz	lutzmatt@rocketmail.com	406-350-0498
Mark Mamuzich	minutemanaerial@yahoo.com	406-728-9363
Boyd Morgan	bmorgan_mt@yahoo.com	406-388-4497
Wesley Mulder	wwmulder@gmail.com	406-852-3568
Paul Newby	agwinc@littleappletech.com	406-586-2804
Robert Nicholson	c12robert.nicholson@gmail.com	406-369-2878
Darrin Pluhar	pluflyinc@mcn.net	406-232-6853
Monte Reder	mlreder18@gmail.com	406-232-6048
Kelly Schindler	k_schindler@yahoo.com	406-679-0688
John Semple	john@jhsincorporated.com	406-443-7487
Nathan Simonson	blackmountainaviation@gmail.com	406-431-5882
Greg Smith	gsmith@skylineav.com	406-350-0251
Robert Sneberger	sneberger@hotmail.com	406-239-8377
Scott Snider	sesaviation@hotmail.com	406-249-0285
Patrick Stromberg	patrickstromberg@hotmail.com	701-330-0292
Andy Taylor	newfrontier@itstriangle.com	406-622-5682
Guy Terrill	hubcap@bresnan.net	406-683-5084