

The Manager's Approach



Vol. 3 Issue 5

Columbia & Pine Mountain Lake Airports

May 2004

Grass Runway Opened

We had a wonderful celebration of the opening of the grass runway on April 30th. Over 100 pilots and enthusiasts attend the opening ceremony which featured Chris Miller and Jim Doyle performing a couple of formation low passes in their Stearmans followed by Chris cutting (breaking) the ribbon with the wheels his plane...the runway was officially opened. Shortly thereafter, Tom Praisler, Ron Sawyer, Jim Hembree and others tested out the new grass.

I want to thank all those that helped with the event, especially Sterling Bigbee, Meike Larwick and Liz Logan for preparing the food. Hart Drobish and Rick Livingston provided drinks that were cooled by the Road Departments year old ice. I know there were several people that took "extended lunches" to enjoy the event. Thanks to all that participated.

It's Not Asphalt and It Requires Special Attention By All

Now that the celebration is over, I want to make sure all of our local pilots understand a few things about using the grass runway. In order to pack a lot of information into a short article, I am going to make my points using bullets.

- No take-offs are allowed on 11 because of the conflict with take-offs on 17-35. Landing on 11 is discouraged. Avoid go-arounds on 11.
- The traffic pattern for 29 conflicts with the traffic pattern for 17. 29 is left traffic and 17 is right traffic. This is a

real concern when the wind is from the southwest. Watch for conflicting traffic.

- Talk and listen on the radio. Listen for planes landing on 29. Listen for aircraft taking off on 17 or 35. Let others know your intentions.
- Be courteous and adjust to the situation. Slowdown, speed up, or make a 360 and let others know what you are doing.
- The grass provides for a lot of wheel drag. This is great for landing but is a real issue on take-off especially when the density altitude increases.
- Runway 29 is uphill into rising terrain.
- Don't use 29 if it is a hot day with no wind and your aircraft is heavily loaded.
- Fire season is here so keep an eye and ear out for the fire bombers. Remember they take off on 17 and land on 35.

Who Has The Right-of-Way

Federal Aviation Regulations, Part 91
GENERAL OPERATING AND FLIGHT
RULES

Subpart B--Flight Rules, Sec. 91.113g

Landing. Aircraft, while on final approach to land or while landing, have the right-of-way over other aircraft in flight or operating on the surface, except that they shall not take advantage of this rule to force an aircraft off the runway surface which has already landed and is attempting to make way for an aircraft on final approach. When two or more aircraft are approaching an airport for the purpose of landing, the aircraft at the lower altitude has the right-of-way, but it shall not take advantage of this rule to cut in front of another which is on final approach to land or to overtake that aircraft.

*Identifier Change at Pine
Mountain Lake
Q68 to E45 on June 10, 2004.*

I received a notice from the FAA National Flight Data Center stating that the identifier for Pine Mountain Lake Airport will be changed from Q68 to E45 on June 10th. The reason for the change is listed as a conflict between the Area Navigation Routes (RNAV) identifiers that begin with the letter "Q" and airport identifiers that begin with the letter "Q".

I called the FAA to obtain additional information on the affects of the change. I learned that in the Western Region alone there are 40 airports whose identifiers are being changed. They could not tell me the number nation wide. All charts, plates, and publications will be updated in the next issue cycle.

What does this all really mean to us pilots? First, after June 10th you should use E45 when referring to Pine Mountain Lake Airport whenever you are talking to the FSS or air traffic control. Next, if you update your GPS with a database issued after June 10th you may have to enter E45 to get the airport, otherwise you might find yourself headed to some RNAV intersection in Siberia! Last, if you continue to operate an older GPS database, you will still have to use Q68.

Keep in mind this change is for all "Q" identifiers not just Pine Mountain Lake Airport. The solution to this problem is simple, update your database and purchase new charts. During the transition period I suggest you be skilled at "looking up" airports in your GPS and you also carry around an older sectional chart and airport directory so you can cross reference the old with the new.

Stupid Pilot Tricks

My hot button this month is focused on "whose runway is it?" I have seen several instances where vehicles cross the runway

when there is an aircraft on the take-off roll, when on final, or on roll-out. This happens at both Columbia and Pine Mountain Lake Airports. Thankfully, none of the situations I have seen were in anyway dangerous. The problem is that people become complaisant and lax in their vigilance. Everyone crossing a runway should stop and look both ways before crossing. Look twice or even three times. Look at the run-up area, at the taxiway, at both ends of the runway, on the runway between you and the ends of the runway, in the sky, on base, on final. Look for a small airplane, a large one, one with lights and one without. Polished aluminum aircraft like mine take on the color of their surroundings and become difficult to spot. Look for ultralights and airliners. Take your time, enjoy the view, then cross with caution and confidence that it's all clear.

Now how about blocking access to the runway while in an aircraft so another aircraft can't get by? I got stuck behind a guy doing his run-up at the hold line for 17. Did the pilot not see the 2 acre run-up area 6' off his right wing? I thought he was going to depart without doing a run-up so I pulled in behind him after doing my run-up. There I was getting blown around by his prop blast. Had I known he was going to be doing a run-up at the hold line, I would have stayed back and off to one side. Run-up areas are just what the name implies; let's all use them.

Stupid Pilot Tricks is a monthly article that attempts to raise awareness of safety and courtesy issues around our airports.

The Manager's Approach is a monthly publication from the Tuolumne County Airports Director for the purpose of keeping our community informed of local aviation and airport issues. You can contact me at:

Tuolumne County Airports Department
Jim Thomas, Airports Director
10723 Airport Road, Columbia, CA 95310
209-533-5685
jthomas@co.tuolumne.ca.us