

The Manager's Approach



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Columbia & Pine Mountain Lake Airports

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Grass Runway Update

Several pilots have asked me when the grass runway would be opened. My standard answer has been “around the first week in April”. Well April is quickly approaching and so I thought I would give everyone a quick status report.

At this time the grass runway is still the responsibility of the contractor; it has not been turned over to the County. On Thursday March 11th we will be conducting a final inspection of the grass runway with the engineer and the contractor at which time we will determine a turn-over date when the responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the grass runway will revert to the County. There are a few punchlist items that need to be done, such as painting the concrete runway markers and sweeping the new blast pad.

Additionally, there is one outstanding issue that needs to be resolved that is not a punchlist item. Our water well is producing a fair amount of sand and fine gravel, which is plugging up the filter, thus lowering the water pressure to the sprinkler heads. We plan to pull the pump from the well, investigate the problem, and then decide on the best fix to assure the maintenance and operation of the grass runway irrigation system is made as easy and reliable as possible.

I am hoping to have a grand opening barbeque April 3rd to express my appreciation for all the cooperation we received from our local pilots and the hard work put in by our contractors during the construction effort. Be on the look out for a formal announcement of this event.

Security Issues

I feel everyone at both airports is doing a great job at keeping our airport secure; however, we are still having some problems. Last month AirMed had their golf cart stolen, which was later found on the west side of the airport outside the fence and stuck between some trees. Fortunately, it only received minor damage that included a broken windshield and a bent top. To the best of our knowledge, we believe it was stolen at night when there are few people around the airport.

Keeping an eye on our airports and the people in and around the fence line is something all our tenants should be doing. If you see someone that looks like they don't belong here, please take the initiative to go ask them if they need help or directions. Suspicious people should be asked to leave the airport and also reported to the airport Administration Office.

Related to airport security is the use of gate access cards. We have issued several hundred cards and keeping track of them is an ongoing job. If you lose your card, please report it to us so we can “lock out” that card number rendering it useless to whomever finds it. Yes, you will have to pay a \$25 card replacement fee, but it is best to keep our airport secure by keeping gate cards out of the hands of those not welcome on our airport.

Lost & Found

A handheld radio was found on the PML runway. If you think it is yours, please call my office (209-533-5685).

Columbia Airport Representative

Columbia Airport is a part of the Columbia Area Advisory Council, which reviews local issues and advises the County on the relevant concerns of the Columbia community. The Council meets once a month in the evening at the Eagle Cotage. I am looking for someone to represent Columbia Airport at these meetings and then report to me on any issues that arise that may affect the airport. If you are interested in representing the Airport on the Columbia Area Advisory Council, please contact me and I'll provide you with more information regarding the responsibilities of the position.

Historic Aircraft Display

Our aircraft are subject to personal property tax. However, there is an exemption for aircraft that are considered to be of historical significance. One requirement for this exemption is that the aircraft must be displayed at least 12 times a year.

Several people have asked me if the County would consider hosting aircraft display days where the public could view their aircraft. I am very much in favor of this and feel it is good for everyone involved. It helps the aircraft owner, provides good publicity for airports and stimulates public involvement.

I am working with our local aviation organizations to set up some display days. If you are interested in helping out at any of these events, please give me a call or come by my office. There will be a few responsibilities, mostly setting out signs, welcoming aircraft and filling out authorized display forms. If you love airplanes, this would be a perfect way to make a small contribution to our aviation community.

Father's Day Fly-In Coming Up

Mark your calendar for the 38th Annual Columbia Airport Father's Day Fly-in, which will be held June 19th and 20th.

Stupid Pilot Tricks

This month I want to talk about a situation many of us observe all too often. One that is wasteful, possibly damaging and sometime dangerous. It is also, something every pilot with more than 50 hours has most likely done. The stupid act I'm referring to is spilling fuel on the ground or ramp and it manifests itself in several forms:

1. Over filling your fuel tanks and spilling fuel on yourself, the airplane, and the ramp.
2. Filling your tanks to the "brim" with cool fuel and then having the fuel heat up in the sun and spill out the vent onto the ramp.
3. Parking on a slope with too much fuel and your fuel selector in the "both" position allowing the fuel in the upper wing to flow to the lower wing then out the vent onto the ramp.
4. Operating an airplane with a leaking quick drain that continually drips fuel onto the ramp.

All too many times we have had to place a bucket under the wing of a plane that was dripping or sometimes flowing fuel out of a wing vent. At \$2.70 a gallon this is a waste of money. The asphalt ramp does not enjoy being flooded with fuel that penetrates and softens the surface, and if this were to occur in a hangar, a serious fire hazard could be created. Please do your part to manage your fueling and aircraft fuel system so we can avoid these undesirable situations.

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:

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