

# Montana and the Sky

Montana Department of Transportation

Aeronautics Division

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## Aviation Career Exploration Academy

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) Aeronautics Division hosted its annual Aviation Career Exploration (ACE) Academy in June. The camp allows high school students to learn about careers in aviation, explore flight, and learn what opportunities are available within the industry.

On the first day, students went on introductory flights, flew drones, toured Helena College's Airframe and Powerplant mechanic program, the Montana Army National Guard Aviation Support Facility, a fixed based operator, an air ambulance company, the Helena Airport and Air Traffic Control Tower, and an airfield fire department crash rescue facility.

On the second day, students took a field trip to Missoula. There, they toured Neptune Aviation to see their aerial firefighting aircraft, the Museum of Mountain Flying where they saw the Miss Montana DC-3, the Smokejumper Visitor Center, and Washington Companies.

On the final day, the ACE Academy hosted a small, general aviation fly-in at the Canyon Ferry airstrip. Students had the opportunity to see a variety of private aircraft, flown in by proud owners from across the state. Pilots enjoyed speaking with students and sharing their aviation stories, experiences, and careers. Students also heard from industry experts such as professional pilots, engineers, aircraft mechanics, flight nurses and paramedics, various local aviation business owners, and other aviation professionals.

Thank you to the businesses and pilots who donated their time and efforts to allow students to sneak a peek into their world of aviation! This camp is an inspiration to the next generation of the aviation workforce. One student said about their experience, "I loved learning what ways I can become involved in aviation, as there are hundreds of job opportunities."



*Photo courtesy of Aeronautics staff*



*Photo courtesy of Aeronautics staff*



*Photo courtesy of Aeronautics staff*

## Students Visit Yellowstone Airport

At the end of May, students from the town of West Yellowstone took a field trip to the Yellowstone Airport. Second and fourth grade-students got to experience daily life at their local airport and explore what happens there. This included visiting the Delta Airlines ticket counter and receiving a pretend boarding pass then going through the security checkpoint where they got a look at the luggage x-ray machine and metal detector.

Students also learned basic marshaling signals from SkyWest operations employees, fired water cannons from the firetrucks at the airport fire station, toured the Montana Aeronautics Cessna 206 and the Air Methods medical transport helicopter, flew flight simulators and drones, and finally enjoyed some delicious ice cream bars.

# 2023 Yellowstone Airport Summer Intern

Yellowstone Airport is excited to welcome Oliver Nordlie to the team for the 2023 season. Oliver will be working alongside the Airport Manager and other airport employees this summer to provide supplementary support and learn what it takes to operate Yellowstone Airport.

Oliver is a recent graduate of the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks, North Dakota. He earned a degree in Aviation Management with a specialization in business aviation. Oliver is also an instrument-rated commercial multi-engine pilot. He was involved in his university's swim and tennis clubs.

After this internship, Oliver hopes to pursue a career in airport management or airline operations. Oliver is excited to learn how Yellowstone Airport operates and how it is managed.



*Photo courtesy of Aeronautics staff*

## Canyon Ferry Airstrip gets Updates, Scouts Work on Aviation Merit Badges

In June, Montana Aeronautics gathered at the Canyon Ferry airstrip with the East Helena Scouts, airport manager Dwight Thompson, MPA, and volunteers to paint the rocks that mark the field elevation and help Scouts work on their aviation merit badges.

After the airport work was done, Scouts completed introductory flights, learned the forces of flights, explored aviation careers, flew drones and flight simulators, and learned the basics of navigation and primary flight instruments. The evening wrapped up with burgers cooked over a campfire, donated by Dwight Thompson.

Last year, the Montana Pilots Association (MPA) and volunteers painted designated markings on the Canyon Ferry runway identifying a 900'X25' area to practice short and soft field takeoffs and landings.

This effort provides pilots an unobstructed place to measure their skills and their aircraft's capabilities without having the stress of a runway overrun or having to clear tall trees immediately off the departure or approach end to the runway. It also provides a helpful environment to demonstrate the effects of high density altitude on a short runway.

While Canyon Ferry is the first airstrip in Montana to receive these practice markings for the public to use, it won't be the last! Plans are in the works to paint additional airstrips in west central Montana this summer. If you want to help, contact MPA president, Mike Vivion at mpaprez@gmail.com.

Be sure to fly to Canyon Ferry to utilize the practice strip before hitting those short, obstructed, confined, and super fun airstrips this summer. Practice makes perfect; practicing for the first time at a challenging airstrip isn't advisable, regardless of your capabilities.

Dwight Thompson is the newly appointed airport manager of both the Townsend and Canyon Ferry airports in Broadwater County. Significant improvements have been made to both airports by Dwight in his official capacity, and through the time and resources he has volunteered. Both airports are in fantastic condition and ready for your visit thanks to Dwight!

A special thanks is owed to Dwight Thompson for the support of the Scout Aviation merit badge program, and for welcoming the practice runway markings. It is especially nice that the Canyon Ferry runway has been well maintained and is in great shape for visitors! Recent improvements include triple rolling of the runway, cactus removal in the parking area, outhouse updates, weed mitigation, and mowing. Many airports across the state rely heavily, some solely, upon volunteer power. Thank you to all volunteers for your hard work, dedication, and perseverance to maintain Montana's airports!



*Photo courtesy of Aeronautics staff*



*Photo courtesy of Matthew Nelson*

# Montana Aeronautics Acquires New Flight Simulators

Montana Aeronautics is excited to announce it has acquired two new, updated flight simulators! This new software and equipment will replace two sets of outdated computers and bulky equipment that have been packed around for many years, allowing students and the public to safely try their hand at the controls of an airplane.

Microsoft reinvented the simulation software and released new versions for computer and Xbox. Now, the software is better than ever! The new software has updated graphics, functional instrument panels, realistic air traffic control, weather, and full flight controls. Montana Aeronautics purchased the new simulator set-ups this spring and has already taken them on the road several times for students to explore the forces of flight.

The simulators are primarily used to further aviation education programs and entice the public's interest in aviation while exhibiting at events. The simulators are lightweight, compact, and easy to set up. The flight simulators are a great tool to further advance science, technology, engineering, and math demonstrations as they relate to the principles of flight.



Photo courtesy of Aeronautics staff



Photo courtesy of Aeronautics staff

## Calling all High School Students!

Calling all aviation enthusiasts ages 14 to 18: join MDT Aeronautics Division at the Yellowstone International Air Show in Billings on August 11th for an action-packed day featuring the world-famous Blue Angels!

The Yellowstone International Air Show is a spectacle-scale family-friendly event that merges awe-inspiring feats of aviation with patriotism, military and civilian aircraft, sports, entertainment, art, technology and more. It's truly a unique experience!

Shuttles will leave the Montana Department of Transportation Aeronautics office, located in Helena, on August 11th at 6 a.m. and return on August 12th at 12 p.m.

Registration is open to students ages 14 to 18 years old. The registration fee is only \$50 and includes transportation to Yellowstone International Air Show, one night (double occupancy) lodging, meals, and VIP-only admission to Friday's Air Show. The trip is subsidized and sponsored by the MDT Aeronautics Division. We look forward to having your students come with us to see some of the most precision flying in the world.

**Registration is limited**, so apply today at: [https://www.eventsquid.com/event.cfm?event\\_id=20644&fromdash](https://www.eventsquid.com/event.cfm?event_id=20644&fromdash).

For more information, please visit the Yellowstone Air Show website: <https://www.yellowstoneairshow.com>.

## Calendar of Events

**July 15 — Lincoln Airport Fly-in Breakfast.** The Lincoln Airport Foundation will host fly-in breakfasts from 8 to 11 a.m. on the third Saturday of each month from May to September. Donations will be accepted to support the airport courtesy car. For more information, contact Doug Vulcan at [vulcandg406@gmail.com](mailto:vulcandg406@gmail.com).

**July 15 — Schafer Meadows Work Party.** Fly to 8U2 to help out. Starts at 9 a.m. Dinner provided.

**July 15-16 — St. Ignatius Fly-In.** July 15 there will be a free barbecue, and on July 16 there will be a free huckleberry pancake breakfast. Affordable helicopter rides for purchase both days. For more information, contact Michael Kuefler at 406-544-2274.

**July 21-23 — Big Sky International Balloon Rendezvous.** *Billings.* Calling all hot air balloon pilots! Come gather with other balloon pilots and enthusiasts. There is limited space for balloons. Interested pilots can register at: <https://forms.gle/UcsA76r1WY8R8Ahg9>.

**August 4-5 — Montana Antique Aircraft Association Fly-In.** *Three Forks.* Breakfast available for purchase on Saturday at 9 a.m. Ping pong ball drop, spot landing contest, flour bombing, people's choice static display award. For more information, please contact Nick Hill at 503-209-1041.

**August 12-13 — Yellowstone International Airshow.** *Billings.* Experience a two-day lineup of family-friendly aviation excitement featuring the US Navy's Blue Angels flight demonstration team. For tickets and information visit: <https://yellowstoneairshow.com/>.

**August 19 — Lincoln Airport Fly-in Breakfast.** See details above.

**September 9 — Helena Aviation Day.** *Helena.* 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Aircraft static displays, Boeing facility tours, armory and aviation facility open house, events and games for kids. 5K Fun Run at 5 p.m. For more information, contact [matthew.d.rowland6.mil@army.mil](mailto:matthew.d.rowland6.mil@army.mil).

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## Aeronautics Loan & Grant Application Reminder

As a reminder to airport loan and grant applicants, the Loan and Grant online portal will accept FY 2025 applications starting July 1, 2023 - November 15, 2023. For more information, go to <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/aviation/loans-grants.shtml>

Additionally, make sure projects are broken down as required. As an example, asphalt projects should be broken down by runway, apron, and taxiway, not as one project lumped together.

### **Airport Sponsors-**

As a friendly reminder, airport sponsors who were previously awarded a loan or grant from Montana Aeronautics are required to complete a status update or project closeout form annually to be eligible to apply for additional funding. If you cannot access the application on the website, you may have a previous award that needs a closeout form, or an annual status report filed.

If you have any questions or need assistance with the loan and grant program, please contact Stephen Torske at 406-444-9569 or [storske@mt.gov](mailto:storske@mt.gov).

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