

Montana and the Sky

Montana Department of Transportation

Aeronautics Division

Vol. 76, No. 9

September 2025

2026 Aviation Scholarship Sponsors Needed

There are scholarships available for individuals in Montana who are interested in aviation. These scholarships are made possible by generous individuals and organizations who believe in supporting aviation education. The scholarships aim to help with the costs of education, such as flight training or attending aviation mechanic school.

If you are interested in sponsoring a scholarship for the 2026 cycle or need additional information, please contact the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) Aeronautics Division **before September 12, 2026**, at mdtad@mt.gov or 406-444-2506.

Available scholarships will be posted online mid September and the October Montana and the Sky newsletter.

Available scholarships and application instructions may be found at mdt.mt.gov/aviation/scholarships.aspx.

The winners of the scholarships will be announced in January 2026, and they will receive their awards February 27, 2026 at the Montana Aviation Conference in Billings.

Tailwinds - Gary Wolterman

It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of Gary George Woltermann of Columbus, Montana, who was lifted by a tailwind just after midnight on June 16, 2025, at the age of 84.

Flying became his love. He earned his private license at age 17, Commercial License at 18, and Flight Instructor at 21. At age 24, he was chosen to be a Designated Pilot Examiner by the FAA. For 40 years, he gave thousands of flight tests to aspiring student pilots that cemented life-long friendships in the aviation community. He had over 31,000 hours of flight time and held an Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) Certificate, rated in Multi-Engine and Single Engine Land, Single Engine Sea, Flight Instructor and type rated in a Douglas DC-B26 (WWII Bomber) and Cessna Citation Jets. His cherished baby was a Beechcraft Bonanza that he bought in 1964 and owned for nearly 60 years.

The Wright Brothers "Master Pilot" Award was presented to Gary on October 28, 2015, "In recognition of your contributions to building and maintaining the safest aviation system in the world, through practicing and promoting safe aircraft flight operations for 50 consecutive years." He was an invited member of Ye Anciente and Secret Order of Quiet Birdmen and was a Certified Goodfellow - QB No. 22,998.

To read Gary's full obituary, scan the QR Code below.



Picture courtesy of Smith Funeral Chapels

To quote a lifelong pilot friend:
"He was a pilot's pilot. The best of the best."

Aeronautics Loan & Grant Applications Open

As a reminder to airport loan and grant applicants, the loan and grant online portal will accept FY 2026 applications starting July 1, through November 15. If you cannot enter the website, you may have a previous award that needs a closeout form, or an annual status report filed.

Projects must be broken down by type and itemized on the application. For example, asphalt projects should be broken down by runway, apron, and taxiway, not as one project lumped together. Eligible projects may include airport pavements, safety related items, lighting, weather cameras, Weather reporting systems, fuel farms, and more.

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.

To access the on-line portal go to:

<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/aviation/loans-grants.shtml>

Or scan the QR Code





Schafer Meadows Work Session

This years Schafer work party had 14 airplanes and 23 people in attendance. Projects included painting the approach end fence orange, lopping the vegetation near the approach end, filling a wallow the USFS stock made in the runway, replacing both windsocks and the US flag, repairing some downed jack leg fence around the airstrip, removing noxious weeds and relocating lumber.

Many thanks to all the RAF (Recreational Aviation Foundation) and MPA (Montana Pilots Association) members as well as MDT Aeronautics' Administrator Tim Conway and his wife Karen for their help. This year there was a group from the Deer Park, WA area who had heard about the work party and flew over to help out.

Thanks also to Loren Smith from Great Falls who provided the pork chop dinner and to Jeff Patnode and Pete Smith for cooking this year.

Del Bonita (Whetstone) H28 Work Session

This year, the long-running joint work session to maintain the Del Bonita airport took place on June 17th. Often used as a border crossing for aircraft with Canadian and US Customs available, Del Bonita has benefited from an international joint effort over forty plus years to maintain the turf runway by the MT Aeronautics Division, Alberta Flying Farmers, MT Pilots Assoc., the Alberta Aviation and Aerospace Council, in addition to many various volunteers.

This year, among several other aircraft and owners, the effort was joined by 16 students and instructors in four aircraft from the Super T flight School in Canada.

What a great experience for student pilots to get some time on a turf strip and take part in the work needed to keep them in good condition!



Augusta Airport

The MDT Aeronautics Division installed a new vaulted toilet at the Augusta Airport. For those of you who have visited this airstrip before, you know the old wood outhouse was much beyond its useful life, serving only as a good perching spot for the gopher-hungry prairie hawks.

The new facility will last for decades and is welcomed by recreationalists as well as the occasional fire camps and search and rescue operations centers that base at the airstrip.



Welcome back, Kelly!

MDT Aeronautics is happy to welcome back Kelly Atkins as our new Aviation Program Manager! Kelly was previously with us as Aviation Program Coordinator and left to pursue an incredible Bear Management opportunity in the wilderness of Yellowstone National Park.

Kelly has a background in wildlife research, data analysis, and education program management. He has returned to the Aeronautics division after working for the last few years in Yellowstone National Park's bear management program and as an independent consultant and analyst on research involving the region's grizzly bears as well as seabirds in the United Kingdom.

He is a private pilot who enjoys flying his Symphony SA-160 and getting out to explore Montana's many outdoor recreation opportunities.

Kelly will be managing the upcoming 2026 Aviation conference in Billings as well as working on research, development, and management of projects and new programs for both the Safety and Education and Airports and Airways Bureaus.

Kelly can be reached at
406-444-2530 or
email katkins@mt.gov.



FAA Announces MOSAIC

The Modernization of Special Airworthiness Certification (MOSAIC) final rule made revolutionary changes to the Light Sport Aircraft (LSA) category and to Sport Pilot privileges, expanding a safe alternative to experimental amateur-built aircraft by:

- Removing the 1,320-weight limit, which allows for more safety features and safety-design flexibility.
- Encompassing aircraft with higher speeds, more seats and retractable landing gear.
- Allowing for new types of propulsion and modern avionics.
- Allowing aerial work with LSA such as infrastructure and forest inspections, photography/filming, and agricultural surveillance.
- Allowing pilots operating under Sport Pilot privileges to fly a broader range of aircraft.
- Reducing regulatory requirements by expanding the types of aircraft that qualify as LSA and the types of aircraft pilots can fly under Sport Pilot privileges.
- Enables the manufacture and use of safe and economical aircraft for recreation and flight training.

Under MOSAIC, a sport pilot can fly most aircraft that have a stall speed up to 59 knots. Pilots holding a private pilot certificate or above can fly most aircraft that have a stall speed up to 61 knots.

This change means as much as 70% of the current general aviation fleet — including legacy airplanes such as the Cessna 172 — will be able to be flown by sport pilots. Allowing for new types of propulsion and modern avionics.

Limestone Hills Restricted Airspace Update

Restricted area R-4601 in the vicinity of Townsend, Montana was approved. The new restricted area will provide the Montana Army National Guard and the 40th Helicopter Squadron with the ability to conduct live-fire aerial gunnery training in the Limestone Hills Training Area. R-4601 extends from the surface to 9,000 feet and is located approximately four miles west of the Townsend Airport and extends approximately eight miles to the southwest.

It will be activated by a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) to inform nonparticipants when the restricted area is active. When this airspace is not needed by the using agency for its designated purpose, the airspace will be returned to the controlling agency for access by other users. The controlling agency for this restricted area is the Salt Lake Center.

The use of R-4601 is restricted to 140 days of the year and the maximum estimated usage is up to 50 events that may occur during the day or night. During each usage, R-4601 would typically be used for a 2 to 3-hour block for a maximum total of 150 hours per year.

MDT Aeronautics Search and Rescue Services Activated

Around mid-July, a Piper Cherokee from Utah went missing in Montana around midnight. Almost 11 hours later the following day, concerned family members from another state reported they could not contact any of the three people believed to be on board the airplane. This triggered a search and rescue response led by the MDT Aeronautics Division (MDT Aeronautics is the responsible agency in charge of all civil aviation related to search and rescue in Montana).

The pilot did not file a flight plan and was not using flight following. The aircraft's emergency locator transmitter was damaged in the accident; therefore, it was not working properly.

With little information to work from, MDT Aeronautics staff immediately began forensic cell phone, smart watch, and aircraft radar analysis to attempt to identify a last known location. With a soft location quickly identified, a volunteer search aircraft and observer were dispatched from Bozeman followed by the MDT Aeronautics primary search aircraft from Helena. The search aircraft swiftly located the wreckage and then county sheriffs' office ground and air rescue teams were mobilized to the location.

Tragically, there were no survivors.

Calendar of Events

September 6 - 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. Please RSVP to Scott Sponholz at scott.m.sponholz.mil@army.mil.

September 6 - MPA 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 13 - MPA South Central Fly-In. Laurel. For more information, contact John Roberts at 406-855-2372.

September 19 - Basic Aviation Survival and First Aid Skills Course. Helena. For more information, contact Matt Lindberg at 406-444-2506 or mlindberg@mt.gov.

September 20 - Lincoln Fly-In. Pancake breakfast from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. For more information, contact Doug Vulcan at vulcandg406@gmail.com.

September 20 - Sky Ranch Fly-In (MT95). Kalispell. Breakfast served 9 a.m. Spot landing competition. Family-friendly fundraiser for the new Museum of Mountain Flying at Glacier Park International (GPI). More info: FlatheadLakeSkyRanch.com.

September 20 - Harlowton Fly-In and Car Show. Breakfast by Harlowton Kiwanis Club 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. For more information contact Ron Fischer at 406-366-5598.

October 3 - 4 - Aviation Teachers Workshop. Helena and Canyon Ferry. For more information, contact MDT Aeronautics at 406-444-2506 or mdtad@mt.gov.

November 15 - Loan and Grant Application Deadline. For more information, contact Stephen Torske at 406-444-2506 or storske@mt.gov.

December 1 - Aircraft and pilot registration renewals for 2026 opens. For more information or questions, feel free to contact us at 406-444-2506 or mdtad@mt.gov.

January 8 -10 Winter Survival Clinic. Sugarloaf Lodge, Anaconda. For more information, contact Barbara Barnum at 406-444-2506 or mdtad@mt.gov.

February TBD - FIRC. Helena. Details coming soon.

February 26 - 28 - Montana Aviation Conference. Billings. Billings Hotel and Convention Center. For more information, to volunteer or be a vendor at the conference, please contact Kelly Atkins at 406-444-2530 or email katkins@mt.gov.

March 1st- Aircraft and pilot registration renewals for 2026 are due.

MDT Aeronautics Division

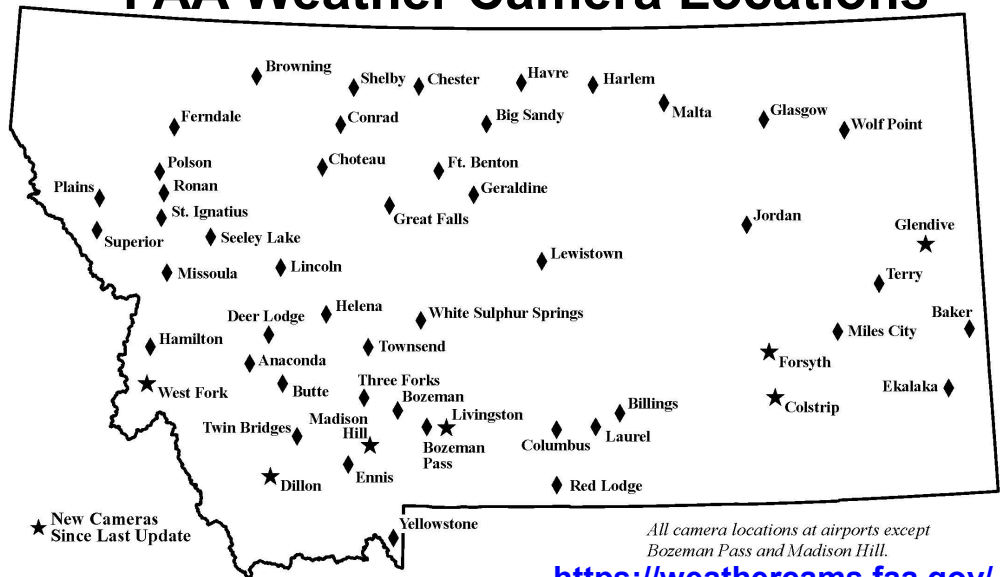
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FAA Weather Camera Locations



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