

To:
USDA/FS Planning Directives Comments
P.O. Box 40088
Portland, OR 97240

Subject: USDA/FS Planning Directives Comments

To whom it may concern:

I am a recreational pilot and I would like to file comments under the topic of recreational aviation.

I has come to my attention that the draft planning directives in the 2012 planning rule do not include recreational aviation as part of the mix of means for the public to enjoy National Forest. In every place that refers to “trails and roads” I believe that airstrips should be included.

While the planning rule includes aviation as a valid form of recreation the proposed directives do not include aviation activities. I would like to see aviation included as an activity in every place where recreational activities are listed and discussed.

Some of the airstrips predate roads and have historical significance for those environs. I would like to see the directives include language that urges planners to consider the potential historical significance of airstrips in their planning area. Chapters 10, 20, 30 and 70 should be revised to put recreational aviation and airstrips on the same footing as other listed infrastructure and recreational activities.

Many of the existing airstrips on public land are maintained by volunteer groups, including the Recreational Aviation Foundation, and I would like the directives to include guidance for planners on the importance of coordination with volunteer groups within their planning areas for any matters regarding aviation.

Forest planners may not have detailed knowledge of airstrips need to be given instructions on where to find more information. Currently the draft directives include sources of information on roads, trails, historic sites, utility corridors and other features but airstrips and aviation information sources are left out of these resource lists.

The Chief of the USFS, Head of BLM and members of Congress have all published comments on the importance of aviation as a recreational activity and the importance of airstrips to the public maintaining and gaining access to public land. In addition to this the Forest Service owns airstrips and they should be included in the directives chapters on Assessment, Land

Management, Monitoring, Wilderness Evaluation of the directives.

Backcountry air strips offer a low impact means for people to enjoy remote backcountry areas that would otherwise be inaccessible. Backcountry airstrips offer an internal trail head for hiking, camping and generally enjoying the outdoors. Additionally backcountry airstrips offer a safe harbor during inclement weather and mechanical trouble for pilots operating in remote areas. I have used remote airstrips as a safe harbor during both situations on more than one occasion and at those times knowing that there was an established, safe place to land and get out of harm's way was a godsend.

My wife and I regularly fly into remote, unimproved airstrips because they are often the only reasonable means to get to the areas that we would like to explore on foot. We often bring camping gear and spend a weekend or longer. Backcountry airstrips make these activities possible.

Care and maintenance of backcountry airstrips is minimal and can be done by local activists who are motivated to keep them open. This has been demonstrated by the Recreational Aviation Foundations recent work party on March 2nd and 3rd to maintain the "Chicken Strip" airstrip in Death Valley. This project was a tremendous benefit to the flying public and done at no cost to the tax payer.

I thank you for your your hard work in developing the directives. Thank you also for your time and consideration on this matter. Please include me on future mailings.

Very Respectfully,