



WINGTIPS



Summer
2013

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CONFERENCE

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RECORD SETTING YEAR FOR TEXAS AVIATION CONFERENCE

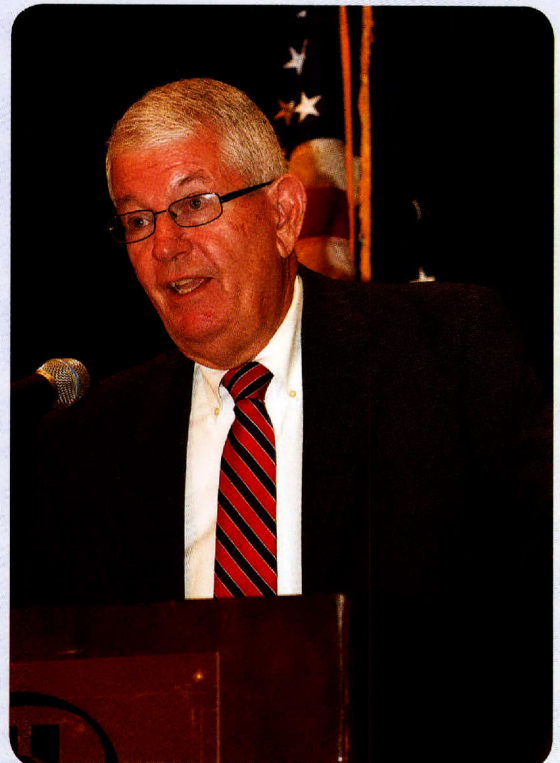
By Chris Sasser
Texas A&M Transportation Institute

The continued economic resurgence and hotbed issues such as impacts of the sequester brought out a record crowd for this year's 31st annual Texas Aviation Conference. The conference was held May 13-15 at the Austin Hilton.

Over 500 people attended the conference, which was hosted by the Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT) Aviation Division. The number represented an increase in participants of 60 from 2012 and 73 from 2011. Conference participants included airport sponsors, TxDOT employees, consultants, contractors and exhibitors.

The conference began with a stirring rendition of the national anthem performed by the Hillsiders quartet. The performance was in remembrance of former Aviation Division (AVN) employee Alton Young, who passed away on January 31, 2010 after a lengthy illness.

Young performed with the quartet and for several years sang the National Anthem to open the conference. The Alton Young Memorial Motorcycle Ride, sponsored by Brannon Corp, is also an annual conference event to honor Young's legacy.



TxDOT Aviation Division Director David Fulton delivers his state of aviation address during the conference's morning session.

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FISCAL CLIFF DISASTER AVERTED

In the February 2013 edition of *Wingtips* I expressed my concern regarding the potential impacts of Sequestration. Sure enough, the March 1st deadline arrives and FAA is required to make budget cuts. FAA's plan to meet the cuts was to furlough most of their employees for one to two days a month and close 149 of the 251 Contract Towers throughout the country. The Contract Towers closings were to begin on April 7, 2013. As Contract Towers provide 30 percent of the air traffic control services at towered airports throughout the nation, there was widespread concern as to the effect that FAA's plan would have on aviation safety and the economic impact on the airports and communities that these towers served. In Texas, 14 airports stood to lose their tower operations.



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David S. Fulton

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On March 27, 2013, Governor Rick Perry sent the following letter to the Texas Transportation Commission:

Mr. Ted Houghton
Chairman
Texas Transportation Commission

Dear Chairman Houghton:

As you are aware, on March 2, federal spending cuts under the Budget Control Act went into effect. Due to the federal government's failure to implement thoughtful and efficient spending cuts, and instead cut critical safety services, starting in early April, federal funding for more than a dozen air traffic control towers across Texas will be eliminated. This action far surpasses the grandstanding Americans have come to associate with sequestration talks by potentially jeopardizing the safety of Texas emergency personnel, citizens and visitors. For the protection of Texans everywhere and to minimize any disruption of commerce caused by this action, I ask the Texas Transportation Commission to consider options to provide emergency, temporary assistance for this vital safety network as determined appropriate by the commission.

After no more than 90 days, I ask the commission to reevaluate this emergency, temporary funding.

While President Obama has chosen to make sequestration as painful as possible, I cannot with good conscience allow him to put his political agenda ahead of public safety.

Sincerely,

Rick Perry
Governor

Upon receipt of Governor Perry's letter, the Texas Transportation Commission scheduled a special meeting for April 4, 2013, to consider approval of the funding requested. Fortunately, the funding approved by the



Commission became unnecessary. Soon thereafter, Congress, realizing the gravity of the situation, passed legislation enabling FAA to cancel the employee furloughs and the closure of the Contract Towers.

We appreciate the support shown by Governor Perry, the Texas Transportation Commission, and TxDOT Executive Director Phil Wilson to keep our towers operating. However, the effort to ensure continued operation of our Contract Towers is not over. Congress will soon take up the FY 2014 appropriation bill to fund FAA's program. It is imperative that the bill include the funding necessary for this vital air traffic service.

Air transportation in the United States is not limited by geographical boundaries. It is a national system. The safe and efficient movement of aircraft within this system has always been and should remain a federal responsibility. Contract Towers provide an important and necessary role in the national air transportation system. These towers should continue to be supported by the federal government.◆

TEXAS AVIATION CONFERENCE *continued from pg. 1*

After introducing the Aviation Advisory Committee and welcoming the gathered dignitaries in attendance, AVN Director David Fulton began the conference with his annual State of the Aviation address. In his address, Fulton noted that the past year was a good one for their aviation program.

"During the last year, we issued \$150 million in grants for our airport improvement program," said Fulton. "Since 1992, right after the formation of our division, we've invested \$1.15 billion in federal and state funds to general aviation (GA) airports in Texas."

Fulton also noted the growth of the Routine Airport Maintenance Program, which in 2012 invested approximately \$7 million into preventative maintenance and other improvements at GA airports.

Looking forward, Fulton explained that they are beginning the 2nd year of a four-year Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization program.

"What's of primary interest in that (FAA reauthorization bill) is the airport improvement grant program," said Fulton. "It did decline about four percent during the recession, so it wasn't too much of a decrease. The good news is that we've been ahead of the game because of the stimulus program, and were able to use that money for airport projects."

Fulton rounded out his address by discussing the recently enacted sequestration. He noted that while sequestration did not affect the grant program, it did pose a serious risk to the contract tower program.

"To meet their four percent budget cut required by sequestration, the FAA initially decided to furlough most of their employees for 1-2 days a month and close 75 percent of the contract towers in America," said Fulton. "We were slated to lose 14 contract towers in Texas, three of which provided commercial service. In an unexpected move, Governor Perry asked the Transportation Commission to investigate options to keep the towers open. Once the Commission received the letter from the Governor, they called a special meeting to discuss options on keeping the towers operating on a temporary basis. Obviously I was delighted and pleased."

Fulton noted that the following day USA Today ran a front page story on the potential tower closures, and then the FAA postponed the tower closings until June 15, which was eventually moved to the remainder of the fiscal year 2013.

"I'm optimistic that we are done fighting this battle," concluded Fulton.

After a morning break, the next presentation was a corporate aviation panel featuring Director of Valero Flight Services and Texas Aviation Advisory Committee member, John White; President and Chief Executive Officer of Schwertner Farms and member of the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents, Jim Schwertner; and H.E.B Aviation Manager, Marc Miller.

The speakers noted the importance of general aviation to communities in advancing economic growth and also shared their experiences, both good and bad, with smaller airports and advised as to what airport managers can do to provide a positive experience for corporate aviation travelers.

The morning session concluded with a high-energy address from Tony Brigmon, the former Southwest Airlines Ambassador of Fun. Brigmon shared his message of communicating to energize, connecting to engage and cultivating relationships to enrich lives.

After the afternoon breakout sessions, the day concluded with the annual awards banquet, which featured two particularly special awards of note.

AVIATION ART CONTEST: "MY FAVORITE AIR SPORT" 2013 AWARD WINNERS

CATEGORY I AGES 6-9

Nathan Boone, Age 7
Uvalde, Texas
1st place
1st place National Winner

Jessica Zhang, Age 9
Port Lavaca, Texas
2nd place

Alicia Gonzalez, Age 8
Driscoll, Texas
3rd place

CATEGORY II AGES 10-13

Chelsey Wen, Age 13
Plano, Texas
1st place
2nd place National Winner
3rd place International Winner

Avery Hunter, Age 11
Corpus Christi, Texas
2nd place

Jessica Bang, Age 13
Corpus Christi, Texas
3rd place

Arianna Lara, Age 12
Brownsville, Texas
Honorable Mention

CATEGORY III AGES 14-18

Nathaniel Powell, Age 17
Premont, Texas
1st place

Michael Hasha, Age 17
Magnolia, Texas
2nd place

Alexis Lozano, Age 14
Brownsville, Texas
3rd place

Eli Reagh, Age 15
Long View, Texas
Honorable Mention

Emily Hernandez, Age 14
Fort Worth, Texas
Honorable Mention

Allexia Esquivel, Age 14
Brownsville, Texas
Honorable Mention

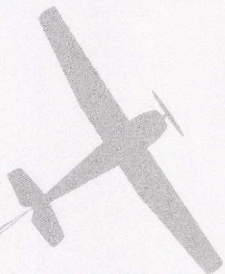


Award winning artist Chelsey Wen is presented an award from NBAA Director of Regional Programs Steve Haaley. Wen placed 3rd internationally.



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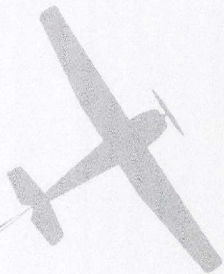
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2013 AVIATION AWARDS

General Aviation Airport Manager of the Year

*Debora Melvin, Airport Manager,
South Texas International at Edinburg*

Most Improved Airport

Port Isabel-Cameron County Airport

Airport of the Year

New Braunfels Regional Airport

Reliever Airport of the Year

Fort Worth Meacham Airport

RAMP Coordinator of the Year

Wayne Rehnborg, Austin District

Texas Aviator of the Year

Len Miller, Quanah Municipal Airport



The 2013 Texas Aviator of the Year award winner Len Miller surrounded by his family.

The first was the announcement that Plano, Texas, resident Chelsey Wen, age 13, placed 3rd internationally in Category II of the International Aviation Art Competition. Wen placed first in Texas, and 2nd nationally for her artwork. The theme of this year's contest was "My favorite air sports."

The second was the Aviator of the Year award won by Len Miller who is 97 years old. During his remarks, Fulton praised Miller for his service to his country, and noted his remarkable career in aviation which began in 1940. During Miller's career, he flew over 200 types of aircraft and taught over 3,000 students how to fly. In 1980 at the age of 64, he became the manager of Quanah Municipal Airport and in 1996 won our Airport Manager of the Year award. According to his kids, "he went there to retire and is still managing the airport at 97 years old." Many of Miller's family were on hand to share in his special moment.

The next morning's activities began with a presentation from National Association of State Aviation Officials (NASAO) President Henry Ogrodzinski. Henry O. (as he's affectionately known) delivered his usual enthusiastic message about the background of NASAO and future challenges faced by general aviation.

The conference concluded with presentations from AVN Division Director of Planning and Programming Greg Miller, and Mike Nicely, Texas Airport Development Office Manager, FAA Southwest Region, explaining airport funding from the state and federal perspectives.

"Every year when planning the conference program, we try to think of topics that are particularly relevant to the current general aviation climate," said TTI Research Scientist and conference program planner Jeff Borowiec. "Given our record attendance numbers and general mood of the conference, I believe we achieved our goal."

Next year's Texas Aviation conference will be held in Dallas at the Sheraton Dallas Hotel on April 9-11, 2014.

All presentations from the conference are available at <http://tti.tamu.edu/conferences/tac13/program/>. ♦

AOPA AT THE TEXAS AVIATION CONFERENCE

By Yasmina Platt
AOPA Central Southwest Regional Manager

For the first time, your association, Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), hosted a booth and the Airport Support Network (ASN) Volunteer Reception during the 31st Annual Texas Aviation Conference in Austin held May 13-15. The booth provided an opportunity to meet and network with aviation industry stakeholders from all around Texas, showcase AOPA's efforts to preserve your freedom to fly and promote the upcoming AOPA Summit scheduled for October 10-12 in Fort Worth.

In addition to the booth, AOPA held an afternoon reception with a few local ASN volunteers and elected officials, as well as TxDOT Aviation Director Dave Fulton. The ASN program is still looking for volunteers in the state. The list below shows some of the Texas airports that currently need an ASN Volunteer. For information about the Airport Support Network (ASN) program and to view a complete list of airports that need volunteers, visit <http://www.aopa.org/Advocacy/Get-Involved/Airport-Support-Network.aspx>.

AIRPORT ID	AIRPORT NAME	CITY
ARM	WHARTON MUNICIPAL AIRPORT	WHARTON
ASL	HARRISON COUNTY	MARSHALL
BBD	CURTIS FIELD	BRADY
BKD	STEPHENS COUNTY	BRECKENRIDGE
ELP	EL PASO INTERNATIONAL	EL PASO
BRO	BROWNSVILLE/S PADRE ISLAND INT'L	BROWNSVILLE
JSO	CHEROKEE COUNTY AIRPORT	JACKSONVILLE
OCH	A.L. MANGHAM JR REGIONAL ARPT	NACOGDOCHES
RPH	GRAHAM MUNICIPAL AIRPORT	GRAHAM
TYR	TYLER POUNDS REGIONAL ARPT	TYLER

To learn more about what is happening in Texas, visit <https://twitter.com/AOPACentralSW>. ♦



L-R: Yasmina Platt, AOPA's Central Southwest Regional Manager, and Joey Collieran, Director of the AOPA Airport Support Network program. Both reside in Texas.



Collin County Regional Airport in McKinney, Texas

2012 Aviation Division Annual Report

Message from the Director

The Aviation Division accomplished great things this year, growing our number of projects and investing in Texas airports even as the economy continues its tenuous recovery. We are proud to support general aviation in Texas, which provides more than **56,000 jobs**, with **\$3.1 billion** in payroll and **\$14.6 billion** in total economic output. This year's highlights include the completion of a **\$52 million** multi-year project at Collin County Regional Airport, which represents the Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT's) largest aviation construction project ever. The centerpiece of the project was a new 7,002-foot runway and relocation of FM 546.

Our significant projects and programs are represented in this annual report. This format provides readers with quick access to a broad spectrum of our work.

We know that more work remains and that we can continue to improve the **294 airports** in our system that serve the **31,260 registered aircraft** and **50,246 active pilots** who flew over **2 million hours** in Texas. However, we are committed to our vision, and we have the resolve to see it through. Our progress this year is a tribute to our remarkable staff. It is also a tribute to our airport managers, our stakeholders, and city governmental officials who help make the Texas airport system the finest in the country.

David Fulton, Director

Texas Department of Transportation

Division Overview

The Aviation Division helps cities and counties obtain and disburse federal and state funds for reliever and general aviation airports included in the nearly 300-airport Texas Airport System Plan (TASP). The division also participates in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) State Block Grant Program, through which it implements a federal improvement program for general aviation airports.

Division staff responsibilities include oversight for the planning, engineering, and grant management of aviation capital improvement projects across the state. The division also operates a fleet of state-owned aircraft for the transportation needs of state officials and employees.

Capital Investment Highlights

In 2012, a total of \$120 million was invested in airport infrastructure from reliever airports to small, rural general aviation airports. This number includes:

- \$48.7 million in maintenance/rehabilitation/reconstruction work to maintain and preserve the existing system
- \$26.5 million in capacity improvements for runways, taxiways, and apron space
- \$26.9 million in airport improvements to ensure they meet FAA standards and safety compliance
- \$2.4 million in master plans, business plans, and feasibility studies
- \$1.5 million in environmental impact studies



New terminal building at Texas State Technical College-Waco Airport in Waco, Texas

**In 2012,
\$91.5 million
was spent on
new construction,
rehabilitation, and
maintenance for
runways, taxiways,
and aprons.**

Funding the Airport System

The Aviation Facilities Development and Financial Assistance Program is administered by the division. Funding for airports in the TASP comes from federal, state, and local sources.

Texas, one of ten states, is a participant in the FAA State Block Grant Program, and takes the lead in carrying out the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) for general

aviation and reliever airports in the state. As such, TxDOT acts as the agent for the state and political subdivisions with airports for the purpose of applying for, receiving, and disbursing federal airport improvement funds.

The AIP uses Aviation Trust Fund monies to invest in the National Plan of Integrated Airports Systems (NPIAS). Trust Fund revenues come from an assortment of aviation user fees and taxes authorized at the national level. In addition, TxDOT provides funding for important non-federally eligible airports in the Texas Airport System Plan.

Combined, the TxDOT Aviation Capital Improvement Program (ACIP) contains specific federal and state eligible projects for development during an upcoming three-year period and implements the program through grants to public entities for the purpose of establishing, constructing, reconstructing, enlarging, or repairing airports, or navigational facilities. The number of projects in the program at any one time is constrained by available funds and system priorities. Local governments also provide a match for funding airport projects, which is typically 10 percent.

Federal Programs

Hangar/Fuel Program

If all airside needs are met, an airport sponsor may pursue funding for the construction of hangars. Federally eligible airports can use Non-Primary Entitlement (NPE) monies for the construction of hangars. Similar to the hangar program, airports without a fuel-dispensing system are eligible to participate in 75 percent grant funding for the aboveground Fuel Facility Development Program.

2012 highlights include:

- Investment of **\$5 million** for hangar development
- Five fuel farms were constructed for **\$890,000**

Air Traffic Control Towers

In 2003, following the passage of a federal funding bill, the Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT) Program offered 90 percent grants up to a maximum of \$1.5 million to qualifying sponsors for construction of air traffic control towers and associated communication equipment. Beginning in 2012, the ATCT Program maximum funding amount was changed to \$2 million.

2012 highlights include:

- **\$265,000** invested for the design of an air traffic control tower

State Programs

Airport Terminal Grant Program

The TxDOT Aviation Division Airport Terminal Grant Program provides 50 percent matching funds up to \$500,000 to sponsors of eligible publicly owned airports for construction of new terminal buildings or remodeling existing terminal buildings, as well as up to \$100,000 in matching funds for appropriate vehicle parking and entrance roads.



Airplane hangar in Uvalde, Texas

2012 highlights include:

- **\$1.7 million** invested for the construction of two terminal buildings

Automated Weather Observing Systems (AWOS)

AWOS can detect and report weather information like surface wind speed and direction, ambient air temperature, dew point temperature, atmospheric pressure, visibility, sky condition, and precipitation. The system's "voice" broadcasts local, minute-by-minute weather data from the ground directly to the pilot in the aircraft. This important information improves safety for pilots flying en route and when landing aircraft.

The division's AWOS program began in 1997, and today, 90 systems have been built and maintained. This year, three new systems were installed, and two existing airport systems were upgraded and relocated.

2012 highlights include:

- **\$513,000** invested for the construction of AWOS

Routine Airport Maintenance Program (RAMP)

RAMP is a cost share program between the Aviation Division, the 25 TxDOT districts, and the general aviation airports in Texas. The program is designed to assist communities with needed maintenance by offering state financial assistance. RAMP funding is a \$50,000 match per airport for each fiscal year. The program includes lower-cost airside and landside airport improvements. Over the years, the program has grown from 30 participating airports with total expenditures of \$250,000 to nearly 200 airports with state grant funds of over \$3.5 million.

2012 highlights include:

- **188 grants** issued
- **\$3.7 million** invested for routine airport maintenance with an additional \$3.7 matched by the airport sponsor

Aviation in Texas—Facts and Figures

Number and Types of Airports

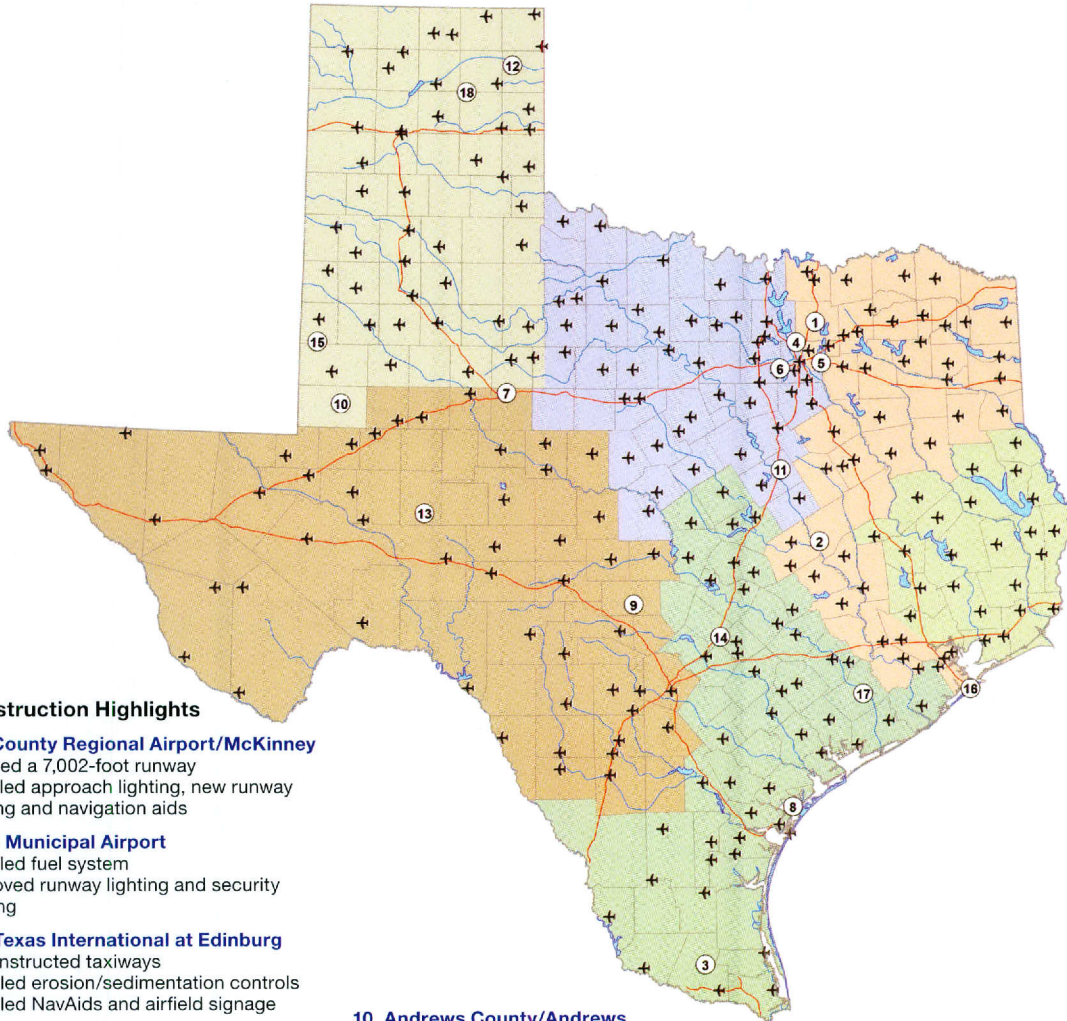
- **27 Commercial Service**—Public airport with a minimum of 2,500 passenger boardings each year; has scheduled passenger aircraft service
- **24 Reliever Airports**—Very high levels of activities with many jets and multiengine propeller aircraft; around 200 based aircraft
- **67 Business/Corporate**—Jet-capable runways with high levels of activity with some jet and multiengine propeller based aircraft
- **108 Community Service**—Business access to smaller communities; 20 based aircraft and around 6,000 operations
- **68 Basic Service**—Typically lower activity levels providing additional convenience for clear-weather flying and training operations
- **3 Heliports**—Used by individuals, corporations, and helicopter taxi and medical services

Flight Services

TxDOT Flight Services provides low-cost travel to state officials, employees, or sponsored contractors traveling on official state business. The Aviation Division operates and maintains the fleet, which is based at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. Besides providing transportation, Flight Services also provides maintenance services to a fleet of 48 state-owned aircraft—18 helicopters and the remainder a variety of fixed-wing airplanes—with 13 full-time mechanics. In 31 years, Flight Services has 66,000 hours of incident- and accident-free flying.

2012 highlights include:

- Providing services for **40** different state agencies
- Transporting nearly **3,000** passengers
- Flying approximately **1,300** total hours



2012 Construction Highlights

- 1. Collin County Regional Airport/McKinney**
 - Opened a 7,002-foot runway
 - Installed approach lighting, new runway lighting and navigation aids
- 2. Hearne Municipal Airport**
 - Installed fuel system
 - Improved runway lighting and security fencing
- 3. South Texas International at Edinburg**
 - Reconstructed taxiways
 - Installed erosion/sedimentation controls
 - Installed NavAids and airfield signage
- 4. Addison Airport**
 - Reconstructed runway holding bay and taxiways
 - Improved geometric layout of taxiways
 - Improved movement area lighting and marking
- 5. Mesquite Metro**
 - Constructed new hangar access taxiway for capacity
 - Installed new localizer shelter
 - Improved precision approach path indicator (PAPI) guidance system
- 6. Arlington Municipal**
 - Constructed new west parallel taxiway
 - Installed new taxiway lighting system and guidance signs
 - Repaired runway shoulders
- 7. Avenger Field/Sweetwater**
 - Rehabilitated and marked runways
 - Improved drainage
- 8. Aransas County Airport/Rockport**
 - Installed game-proof fencing
- 9. Gillespie County Airport/Fredericksburg**
 - Rehabilitated and marked runway and taxiways
 - Relocated and upgraded AWOS
 - Installed game-proof fencing and apron

- 10. Andrews County/Andrews**
 - Constructed concrete fuel apron and marked airfield pavements
 - Rehabilitated runways and taxiways
 - Replaced runway lighting
- 11. TSTC-Waco Airport**
 - Constructed terminal building
 - Rehabilitated taxiway system and terminal apron
 - Upgraded airfield signage
- 12. Hemphill County Airport/Canadian**
 - Reconstructed cross-wind runway
 - Rehabilitated main runway
 - Installed new airfield signage
- 13. Reagan County Airport/Big Lake**
 - Rehabilitated and marked runways and taxiways
 - Installed game-proof fencing
- 14. San Marcos Municipal Airport**
 - Reconstructed taxiway
 - Constructed northside apron and new access road
 - Improved drainage
- 15. Denver City Airport**
 - Rehabilitated and marked runways
 - Replaced runway lights
 - Installed rotating beacon and lighted wind cone

- 16. Scholes International Airport/Galveston**
 - Constructed south hangar development area
- 17. Wharton Regional Airport**
 - Rehabilitated runway and taxiways
 - Replaced taxiway culverts
- 18. Perry Lefors Field/Pampa**
 - Constructed terminal building and auto parking



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Kleberg County Airport/ Kingsville	\$4,717,830	Reconstruct and mark Runway 13-31; reconstruct south taxiway
Calhoun County Airport/ Port Lavaca	\$543,605	Install precision approach path indicators-2 Runway 14-12; replace medium intensity runway lights, lighted wind cone and segmented circle; and install lighted runway exit; install new equipment vault and regulators for runway lights and taxiway lights
Kerrville Municipal Airport/ Schreiner Field	\$40,000	Relocate drainage ditch out of runway safety area Runway 12
Jones Field/Bonham	\$1,605,000	Expand apron, construct hangar access taxiway and construct multiple T-hangars
Mesquite Metro Airport	\$1,042,300	Construct hangar access taxiway for nested hangar; construct localizer access road; construct service road to glideslope/ automated weather observing system; stabilize precision approach path indicator units Runway 17 & 35
Terry County Airport/ Brownfield	\$1,364,400	Rehabilitate and mark Runway 13-31; reconstruct west side hangar access taxiway; rehabilitate and mark north hangar access taxiway; rehabilitate and repair apron; rehabilitate Taxiway B; construct access taxiway and aprons for West side hangars; extend existing apron south around T-hangars; install medium intensity runway lights Runway 13-31; and replace rotating beacon and tower
Addison Airport	\$6,454,600	Construct Engineered Material Arresting System at Runway 15
McC Campbell-Porter/ Ingleside	\$1,004,200	Construct 13 unit T-hangars; construct new pavement at new T-Hangar; install drainage culvert for new hangar access taxiway
Huntsville Municipal Airport	\$2,800,000	Rehabilitate and mark Runway 18-36; rehabilitate south hangar access taxiways, partial north apron, parallel and cross taxiways; reconstruct two south hangar access taxiways, cross taxiway, apron rehab and three north hangar access taxiways; improve drainage along taxiway and runway; install hog and deer resistance fencing; and replace windsock and tower
Wood County Airport/ Mineola	\$1,562,000	Rehabilitate apron; construct and mark partial parallel taxiway; replace medium intensity runway lights; install precision approach path indicators-2 Runway 36; and replace electrical vault
Moore County Airport/ Dumas	\$2,220,216	Construct hangars, apron and access taxiways
Stonewall County Airport/ Aspermont	\$528,100	Rehabilitate and mark Runway 17-35; rehabilitate and mark parallel taxiway; rehabilitate and mark cross taxiways and aprons; sterilize and seal crack Runway 17-35; sterilize and seal parallel taxiways; cross taxiways, and apron
Dimmitt Municipal Airport	\$322,100	Rehabilitate and mark apron; rehabilitate and mark south parallel taxiway to Runway 1; crack seal on remaining pavement; replace sign panels; install tie downs and replace rotating beacon and tower

SHOOTING FOR THE SKY

By David Dennis
Texas A&M Transportation Institute

Charlie Sisk built his first rifle in high school shop class in Madisonville, Kentucky. He still has it. That was the first in a long line of rifles that Charlie put together. Between then and now, he mined coal, farmed and drove trucks. Today, Charlie is the President and Chief Pilot for Sisk Rifles in Dayton, Texas.

Charlie arrived in Texas in 1988. His plan was to drive trucks and get his rifle business going on the side. His plan worked. His bolt-action rifles are in demand worldwide. "A Sisk rifle is a niche product. My complete rifles start at \$6,500 and go up. It's not something that everyone will buy. The bulk of my business is people who go around the world hunting dangerous game," Sisk explained.



Charlie Sisk stands by his workhorse Cessna 182.

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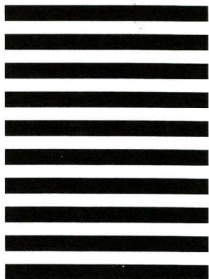
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Charlie didn't start flying until eight years ago. He credits his 1957 Cessna 182 as the reason for his success in business and his interest in advancing general aviation. "If you take my airplane away from me, I'm going out of business. I can't sustain my business like it is without that airplane. Take the tractor away from a farmer and he isn't a farmer anymore. He can't work. It's the same with me," he said. His airplane is based at the Cleveland Municipal Airport (KRNV).

Charlie credits Steve Hadley of the National Business Aviation Association, John White, Director of Corporate Aviation for Valero and President of Texans for General Aviation (T4GA), and Shelly Lesikar deZevallos, T4GA Vice President, for fostering his interest in general aviation advocacy.

"Texans for General Aviation is a group of people who will go out, grab the bull by the horns, do something and do it now. They have the connections to make things happen. It's a very good group of people to work with," he noted.

Since he began flying, Charlie has become very involved with T4GA and serves on the board of directors. His concerns about the future of general aviation are issues that T4GA is addressing with legislators and leaders in Texas. He feels strongly about proposed fees for air traffic control usage. He said, "If user fees come along, a lot of people will quit using air traffic control. I'll be the first to do it. I'll just go out and fly. That's dangerous, but that's the way it's going to be. If you had to pay a fee every time you went to the grocery store, you wouldn't do it. You'd figure a way around it. User fees are just a bad idea."

"If you take my airplane away from me, I'm going out of business. I can't sustain my business like it is without that airplane. Take the tractor away from a farmer and he isn't a farmer anymore. He can't work. It's the same with me," said Sisk.

Getting new people involved in flying is another big issue for Charlie. "If you look at pilots, they are my age or older. There aren't as many new ones coming in as old ones going out. We have to address that," he observed. "I've read that sixty-to-seventy percent of the people who begin flight training never finish. Why? Nobody can answer that question for me. If you can drive a car, you can fly an airplane like mine. We've got to get more people involved. The washout rate has got to change."

What's next for Sisk Rifles? Charlie has developed a new gunstock he calls the STAR – Sisk Tactical Adaptive Rifle. His market is the military, law enforcement and tactical shooters. Again, he credits his plane for the STAR's development. "Being able to fly around and visit with other gun builders, outdoor writers and competitive shooters, machinists and engineers allowed me to come up with my new rifle stock. I could have done that in a car. I would have had it done by the time I was 70, maybe," he said.

Charlie believes in customer service and general aviation, in that order. "My plane gives me a huge edge over my competitors. I don't know of any other gun makers that have their own airplane. They certainly don't use it like I do. I wouldn't say it's an unfair advantage, but I can do things they can't. I could scale my business back and drive everywhere, but that's just not how we do things here in Texas."

You can view Charlie Sisk's custom rifles at www.siskguns.com.

For more information on Texans for General Aviation, visit their website at <http://www.texansforgeneralaviation.org/>. ♦

IMPROVEMENTS AT HUTCHINSON COUNTY AIRPORT PAYING OFF!

By Chris Sasser
Texas A&M Transportation Institute



The new terminal building at Hutchinson County Airport in Borger.

Forgive airport manager Dennis O'Bryant if he's ready to take a deep breath, relax and reap some of the benefits (and the occasional slap on the back) of his recent run of improvements at the Hutchinson County Airport (KBGD) in Borger.

In the past few years, he's overseen a ramp improvement project, the repair of many feet of runway cracks, the resurfacing of runways and taxiways, the improvement of drainage and the widening of hangar access. The airport also opened a new terminal building in September 2011 and recently finished installing 18,000 feet of game-proof fencing.

"Our original terminal building was about 60 years old," said O'Bryant. "Our new facility is a major upgrade with amenities such as a pilot lounge, flight planning area with internet access and a weather briefing area."

The improvements and stellar customer service have not gone unnoticed, as evidenced by a recent "Letter to the Editor" published in the January 29, 2013, edition of the Borger News Herald. According to O'Bryant, the author of the letter, Jim Robins, has been a regular visitor to the airport for several years. Originally attracted by the cheap Jet A fuel, he's continued his patronage of the airport for the good service and first-class amenities.

The following is Mr. Robins' letter, which is reprinted with permission from the Borger News Herald:

WEEKEND VISITOR APPRECIATES HOSPITALITY OF THE CITY OF BORGER

Dear Borger Friends -

On Saturday morning, enroute from Chicago, I stopped for fuel at your Hutchinson County Airport, with its marvelous new operations building and friendly staff. I had hoped to continue on to my home in Santa Fe, NM, but weather, particularly the risk of ice, blocked my route and prevented my departure.

Tracy Ferguson, the airport's line service manager, and one of the friendliest people I've ever met, set me up with a car; a great motel recommendation and a few tips about what to do and where to go. I've had the same royal treatment in the past from Dennis O'Bryant, the airport manager.

So, in a former police cruiser used by the airport as a crew car (people kept waving at me), I set off to spend my day in Borger.

I toured your wonderful Historical Museum and learned about Asa Borger, shot nine times by a tax assessor who was never convicted; the Battle of Adobe Walls; the history behind Thomas Hart Benton's famous oil painting "Boomtown"; and a host of other things. The gentleman who manned the sign-in book was a great host, and a good time was had by all.

I cruised and walked the mall downtown, which has clearly seen better days, but was fun none the less. And after a bit of cruising around in my Ford Interceptor, with spotlight, I settled down at a local eatery for some college football on several big screen TVs and a burger. Finally, back to the motel to plan for my flight home on Sunday and a good night's sleep.

So, why the letter?

You have a wonderful town, and the airport with its new operations center is a fabulous asset. Think about it: I spent almost \$1,000 on fuel; plan a modest gift to the museum; was able to patronize a very nice motel which had freshly made warm cookies at 3pm, and enjoyed a meal and good comradery at a local eatery.

Local airports are good business, and yours is first class. The staff is marvelous. Thanks to your community for investing in this wonderful asset.

See you soon,

Jim Robins

N21VF

Santa Fe, NM

For more information on the Hutchison County Airport, visit their website at <http://www.hutchinsoncountyairport.com/fuel.php>. ♦

AIR TRACTOR AT-802A NUMBER 500 DELIVERED

The 500th Air Tractor 802 series airplane was delivered to its new owner on April 4, 2013. According to Air Tractor, Inc. President Jim Hirsch, S/N 802A-0500 was delivered to its new owner: Drew Spidahl, owner of Ag-Tech Air, LLC in Lena, Illinois. Air Tractor dealer Harley Curless of Farm Air, Inc. placed the order and completed the sale in mid-February. Harley and son Joe were on hand at Air Tractor with Drew and his father Kay to take delivery of the aircraft. This marks the 500th aircraft produced in the 802 series for agricultural and firefighting work.

"When the very first production model AT-802 was delivered in 1993, Leland Snow thought he might sell six or eight the first year and would be satisfied if he could sell 10-15 per year," says Hirsch. The aircraft was originally designed as an 800-gallon capacity air tanker for aerial firefighting. The AT-802 was by far the largest capacity agricultural plane in the industry then, and remains so now, with a 16,000-pound FAA certificated gross weight. "It wasn't long before the 802 was equipped with spray booms and working as an ag plane," said Hirsch. "More and more ag operators saw how the 802 really boosted production and efficiency. Sales steadily grew, and by March 2005, Air Tractor had produced 200 of the AT-802s. Now eight years later we have delivered number 500. Today, the AT-802 is the second best-selling aircraft in our product line, just behind the AT-502."

For more information, please visit www.airtractor.com.

Article courtesy of aeronews.net.



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PALESTINE MUNICIPAL AIRPORT CELEBRATES 80 YEARS!

Join the fun on at an air expo celebrating the 80th Anniversary of the Palestine Municipal airport, the birth of the Experimental Aircraft Association Chapter 1549 Dogwood Flyers, and all things aviation!

Saturday, September 28, 2013, from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Special aircraft on hand includes an A-26 Invader Warbird, static displays that include airplanes from the 1940's and other experimental aircraft.

For more information, email dogwoodflyers@gmail.com or visit www.dogwoodflyers.com or [Facebook.com/dogwoodflyers](https://www.facebook.com/dogwoodflyers). ♦