

## **THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AIRSPACE USERS WORKING GROUP**

**by Al German**  
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Pilots who fly regularly in the Los Angeles area are acutely aware of the size and erratic complexity of the regulated airspace. The configurations of the Class B, C, and D Airspace are not consistent, the altitudes vary, and many are defined by lines on a chart which have no reference to a navigational facility or visual reference.

Some time ago a group was formed to re-establish the LAX "corridor" for VFR pilots. This group fought hard along with AOPA and others with the result that the "corridor" was reopened as the Special Flight Rules Area, with some different rules, but workable. Since then, this Southern California Airspace Users Working Group (Working Group) has been actively attempting to resolve airspace conflicts and make the system work safer and more efficiently for all airspace users. The Working Group is comprised of representatives of every major national or regional aviation group which would be affected by or have a general interest in changes in airspace regulations. The Working Group includes pilots from general aviation, air carrier, military, business, helicopter, glider, flight training, and parachute jumpers. Pilots and administrators from almost every airport in the basin, and virtually every "alphabet" organization are represented, including AOPA, ALPA, ATA, NBAA, ETC. Although the Working Group was originally endorsed by former FAA administrator McCarter, continuing recognition by top FAA management has transpired. FAA representation to the group includes Air Traffic Control (ATC) and Flight Standards. The Working Group charter defines the primary goal: "To maintain a forum which allows all facets of the aviation industry to provide input to the FAA in the areas of safety, airspace design and utilization."

Although the Working Group has been active in several tasks, its primary effort is the proposal for redesign of the entire LA

basin airspace configuration and rules. Called "Terminal and Regional Airspace" (TARA) this "clean sheet" approach is a sizable task and requires expertise from all areas. The objective is to provide airspace protection for high performance turbine aircraft traffic while opening up more unregulated airspace access for VFR aircraft and improving the ATC system efficiency in the basin. Anyone familiar with LA basin traffic will recognize the task's magnitude and the apparent contradiction in these goals. This proposed airspace concept has been presented to LA area FAA managers with positive response. The concept was originally presented to the FAA officials in Washington, D.C. in April 1991. The final report was completed and submitted to the FAA May 1995.

In the past, the Working Group requested several changes to the LA terminal chart which we believe provide added safety and flight operational efficiency: 1) A previous configuration of the LA Class B airspace had a base over Malibu of 4000 ft. The Working Group recommended raising the base over Malibu to 5000 ft. This would allow VFR aircraft transiting the SFRA northwestbound to turn west out of the LAX SFRA and remain at 4500 ft over the Malibu area. In addition the Class B airspace had a section of the airspace blocking Victor 186, a well traveled VFR route between VNY and PDZ. Both problems were fixed in the latest change to the Class B airspace. 2) The Working Group also recommended some changes to the LA Terminal chart to make the chart more user friendly. The back side of the new chart was inverted so that a pilot in flight can unfold it to view either side. Also, the Class B boundary blue lines were darkened. This greatly increases the readability of the chart and helps a pilot distinguish between the Class B boundary and the Victor airways. Both recommended changes were implemented on a recent chart change. 3) The latest change to the LA Class B airspace included three new areas south of the basin over the ocean. No method of determining the location of the boundaries of that airspace were available initially. The back side of the most recent issue of the chart defines the corner of each block by number designation, the

latitude and longitude and the LAX radial and distance. A table listing the radial and distance from other basin VORs is also included.

The FAA is considering some additional operational and chart changes which effect the VFR pilot. Most recently the ATC has been reviewing a relocation of the Shoreline route to allow unrestricted climb for LA Airport departures. The Working Group has been active with the FAA in the design of that relocation. This change would have no effect on the existing Special Flight Rules Area. The FAA has also requested the Working Group to study possible locations of VFR GPS waypoints to provide navigational aids for pilots unfamiliar with the area wishing to avoid regulated airspace, and also to provide waypoint definition of existing reporting points to enter basin airports. These waypoints were defined and submitted to the FAA for inclusion on later issues of the terminal chart.

A few of the other past activities of the Working Group include: 1) When the FAA attempted to impose the LGB ARSA some years back, the Working Group was successful in avoiding the implementation of that additional regulated airspace. 2) Access to ATC VFR services was limited and pilots were discouraged in attempts to contact ATC when airborne. The Working Group pressed to obtain pre-taxi VFR clearances on the ground prior to takeoff so that the ATC services were guaranteed when airborne. 3) When special events take place in the basin the FAA uses the Working Group as a technical aid in making decisions.

In the future, if El Toro becomes a commercial airport, the Working Group plans to become active in assisting the FAA in that airspace design.

In addition to the LA Working Group, airspace working groups have also been formed at San Diego and San Francisco. The Working Group continues to provide a source of technical assistance to those concerned with airspace problems. The Working Group's goal - a complex task

requiring give-and-take by all participants -  
is to make airspace safer and more  
sufficient.

The Working Group has continued in its  
attempt to keep LA pilots apprised of the  
status of changes to airspace and its effect  
on operations by seminars and articles in  
various aviation newsletters like this one.

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