

AERONAUTICAL CHARTING FORUM
Charting Group
ACF 11-01
RECOMMENDATION DOCUMENT

FAA Control # 11-01-238

Subject:

Miscellaneous symbols on VFR sectional.

Background/Discussion:

There are approved aerobatic areas where members that are signature to the waiver perform their specific activity. Unlike glider or parachute areas the aerobatic areas are not depicted on VFR sectionals. Many of these areas do not require a NOTAM to be active so a pilot would not know of the area through NOTAMs, or from a VFR sectional. They can only be found listed in the Special Notices section of the AFD. But unfortunately most pilots do not familiarize themselves with information in these sections.

Recommendations:

The creation of a symbol depicting an aeronautical area, or box which would be added to VFR sectionals. (Similar to glider or hang glider) This would alert transiting pilots of the activity and to exercise extra vigilance.

Comments: This recommendation affects

Submitted by: Mark Payne

Organization: Operation Support Group, AJV-W2

Phone: 425-203-4514

E-mail: Mark.Payne@faa.gov

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MEETING 11-01: Mr. John Moore, FAA/AJV-3B, presented the issue on behalf of the submitter, Mr. Mark Payne, FAA/AJV-W2. The RD suggests a unique symbol be used for airspace that has been established as an aerobatic area on VFR Sectional Charts. At present, airspace that has been established as an aerobatic area is listed only in the A/FD in the Special Notices section, under the heading of "Aerobatic Practice Area".

Ms. Suzette Rash, FAA/AFS-410, commented on the process of how aerobatic areas are established and that the process is handled at a local level by the FSDO. Ms. Rash stated that aerobatic areas are temporary in nature and that such areas may exist from a minimum of one day to a maximum of two years and may only be active during certain hours. Active aerobatic areas are included in Weather/Pilot briefings from an FSS and they are NOTAM'd.

Mr. Ted Thompson, Jeppesen, inquired as to how aerobatic areas are entered into the A/FD. Ms. Valerie Watson, FAA/AJV-3B, stated that such information is sourced internally by

memorandum only. Information is handled by NFDC but not entered in the NASR database nor distributed publicly in the NFDD.

ACTION: Mr. Bruce McGray, FAA/AFS-410, will follow up with Mr. Mark Payne, FAA/AJV-W2, and report back at next ACF.

MEETING 11-02: Mr. John Moore, FAA/AJV-3B, summarized the topic.

Mr. Bruce McGray, FAA/AFS-410, [reviewed current charting practices, showing examples](#) from the LAX and PHX TACs and Sectionals, where boxed notes appeared over areas for Aerobatic Training and Intense Flight Training areas.

Mr. Moore brought up for discussion of whether a symbol should be used versus a boxed note (current FAA practice). In addition, what criteria should be established for use of a symbol?

The group discussed the issues pertaining to the flow and maintenance of the information. Currently, the information is managed locally at the FSDO and Regional FAA offices. If the FAA is to utilize a symbol for depicting area used for Aerobatic Training and/or Intense Flight Training areas, criteria would have to be established for the use and depiction of such areas on FAA VFR Charts. It was suggested that the standards and data basing of information utilized for Parachute Jump areas could be applied to Aerobatic and Intense Flight Training areas.

Mr. Rick Fecht, FAA/AJV-321, stated that while working through the request on charting Aerobatic Areas, that the scope be expanded to flight training areas, specifically Student Training areas. The current request doesn't include Student Training areas in the original submission, but VCAM can expand the scope to include them that may be worth while.

Mr. Moore reframed the discussion within the following areas:

1. What is the scope of the issue – aerobatic only or also flight training areas?
2. VCAM was asked to research and report on:
 - a) Number of areas (Flight Training and Aerobatic Training Areas)
 - b) Source of information
 - c) What does the FAA currently chart (VFR Products Only)?
 - d) Maintenance of to Source to see if they are still in existence and Point of Contact information, validity of information
 - e) What are the geographic boundaries that define the Aerobatic/ Intense Flight Training areas?

Mr. Ted Thompson, Jeppesen, requested the FAA take steps to incorporate all training areas into the e-NASR database, with reference to the solution already implemented for inclusion of Parachute Jump Areas in e-NASR (re: previous ACF agenda item). This capability would provide improved capabilities for both the FAA and other users of the data. Ms. Valerie Watson, FAA/AJV-3B, wholeheartedly supported Mr. Thompson's request that these areas (if required for charting), in addition to the currently charted Glider Operations areas, Ultra light Activity areas and Hang Glider Activity areas, be verified and disseminated by the AIM office.

Mr. Jordan Meek, Lido, brought to the groups attention that with respect to Aerobatic Areas, consideration should be taken into account for low level aerobatic areas (Waivers are for specific areas, low level) vs. those above 3,000 ft.

Mr. Moore asked that the representatives of the VCAM group (Mr. Ron Haag, FAA/AJV-321) to determine the scope and nature of the problem (availability of source, currency of source, dissemination of source, chart depictions, A/FD, etc.)

ACTION: Ms. Valerie Watson, FAA/AJV-3B, to coordinate with FAA's AIS Working Group to represent the need to include ALL types of Training Areas in to e-NASR. The concept being put forward would be for all Aerobatic Training, Glider, etc, area to have the same data characteristics as those found with Parachute Jumping Areas.

ACTION: Ms. Valerie Watson, FAA/AJV-3B and Mr. Ron Haag, FAA/AJV-321, to report back at next ACF.

MEETING 12-01: She took the item to the Aeronautical Information Services Working Group (AISWG) for action. NFDC is now publishing these activity areas as NFDD "add-on" pages. The areas are not contained in the NASR database, but as a first step, at least the information is now being publicly disseminated by an official FAA source (NFDC).

Mr. Rick Fecht, FAA/AJV-321, briefed the ACF on actions within the Visual Charting Group regarding the possibility of using symbology to depict activity areas on visual charts. Research found that a total of 115 A/FD special notices are in effect pertaining to aerobatic and/or training areas. Mr. Fecht reported that of the 86 existing aerobatic areas, 84 have published dimensions which would allow their parameters to be charted. Eight aerobatic areas are identified by notes on the charts placed in the proximity of the area. Additionally, he reported that of the 29 existing training areas, 10 have published dimensions which would allow their parameters to be charted. Twenty-seven training areas are identified by notes on the charts placed in the proximity of the area.

Discussion was opened up as to whether aerobatic and training areas should be identified on the charts with symbology or should the current practice of "notes" remain in place. Feedback from the audience was that the current practice of using box notes was sufficient and, at least for the present and until such time as solid dimensional data could be obtained, databased & utilized, is the only viable option.

Doubts regarding the validity of many of these activity area entries was voiced. Many have been in publication for years and it is possible they are no longer in use. It was proposed that the currently published activity areas be vetted through the Service Areas to confirm their continued validity. When this has been accomplished, the group will return to the question of where (charts, A/FD) the information would best be provided.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Mr. Rick Fecht, FAA/AJV-321, to follow up on both training and aerobatic areas to see if the special notices are still pertinent and if these areas are still active.

MEETING 12-02:

Rick Fecht, FAA/AJV-321, provided an update on actions taken since last ACF. Rick stated that Visual had been in touch with the 3 Service Areas to solicit their input regarding the verification and update of existing areas in the Special Notices section of the AFD. Rick reported that all three Areas had submitted input, but that input has yet to be evaluated. Once the actual number of areas has been determined, the Visual Charting unit will investigate the possibility of charting. Rick will follow up.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Rick Fecht, FAA/AJV-321, will provide an update at the next forum.

MEETING 13-01: Rick Fecht, AJV-321, reviewed the item. Rick stated that Visual Charting sent out update packages to the three ATO Service Areas, requesting that the current aerobatic & training areas be verified/amended/deleted as necessary. Those packages have been returned back to the VFR Mapping Team and there were very few changes to information related to training areas. There were some changes regarding to information related to aerobatic areas:

- 69 current aerobatic areas – 66 are defined by a specific point; 3 defined by parameters.
- Aerobatic areas may exist for 10 days to 2 years.
- Aerobatic areas may be established through FSDO by waiver
- Many aerobatic areas exist that are NOT waived, worked through the FSDO, or published.
- None of the aerobatic areas are maintained in a database

Rick commented that at present there are no specifications that support the charting of aerobatic areas on any FAA products. Currently, aerobatic areas that are submitted by the FSDOs, appear as text entries in the Airport/Facility Directories (AFDs). Maintenance and currency of these entries is dependent on unsolicited input from FSDO or Service Area personnel.

Rick brought up the following aspects related to aerobatic areas that are unknown:

- the dimensions aerobatic of the airspace
- times the airspace area is used
- level of activity

Rick pointed out that until the charting group has a solid source for this information and a designation of what is deemed necessary for charting, Visual Charting is at a loss.

John Moore, Jeppesen, commented that this issue is about criteria – criteria for publication as a Notice in the AFD and criteria for charting on a VFR chart. He asked if there had been thought given to establishing specific charting criteria for aerobatic areas.

Gary McMullin, Southwest Airlines, commented on the way such airspace is utilized: the pilot(s) phone in to the FSDO to have the airspace “turned on” and upon returning to the airports, have

the airspace “turned off”. There is no real way to chart or monitor such areas as it is unknown what specific area is in use at what times.

Hal Becker, AOPA, stated that under Part 91, a pilot is not required to do anything to practice aerobatics in airspace that is at a sufficient distance from a Federal Airway.

Valerie Watson, AJV-3B, in capturing the discussion of the group, stated that the Charting Offices do not have enough information to warrant placing aerobatic areas on the chart, given the nature of the way the airspace is turned on and off and that the definitions of the areas are so vague. She pointed out that the source for aeronautical data in the NAS is the Aeronautical Information Management (AIM) office. If the AIM office can establish criteria (in concert with FSDO reps) for the charting of such areas, and take on the responsibility for publishing those areas designated for charting, AeroNav Products could pursue depiction on Sectionals, TACs & WACs, but until that time, there is not sufficient information.

Greg Pray, AJV-211, agreed to work to establish publication criteria and toward capturing these areas in the NASR database.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Greg Prey, AJV-211, will look at the parachute jump area criteria to see if similar criteria can be used in establishing criteria for aerobatic and training areas. He will investigate entering these areas into the NASR database.

ACTION: Melissa McCaffrey, AOPA, will follow-up with the original proponent of this issue, Mr. Finagin, to obtain more specific information on what he wants, especially with regard to the unknown (unwaivered) aerobatic areas when charting is called for.

MEETING 13-02:

Valerie Watson, AJV-3, reviewed the history of the topic. Valerie emphasized that what is needed by the charting offices is an established source for aerobatic areas that warrant charting. Until it is known where these areas are located, what geographic areas they comprise, when and how long they have been in operation, and which of these are required for charting, a charting/publication strategy cannot be investigated.

Chris Criswell, AJV-22, stated that since that last ACF, he has been working to identify who within the FAA is or should be the authorized source for aerobatic areas. He believes that AFS-800 is the most appropriate authorized source. Once the authorized source is formally identified and a source flow is established, a publication (graphic or textual) strategy can be developed.

Rick Fecht, AJV-321, commented that in his work on this issue, there appeared to be a lack of standardized criteria regarding which are currently published as a Notice in the Airport Facility Directory (AFD) and/or which are indicated by a note on a Visual chart. He mentioned that many of these areas are only operational on a temporary basis via waiver and are hard to track down. John Moore, Jeppesen, suggested that perhaps the publication criteria established for Parachute Jump Areas could be used as a basis for establishing criteria for Aerobatic Areas. The NASR database contains Parachute Jumping Areas with an indication as to which should be charted.

Valerie commented that this issue is of potential safety concern and that the charting offices should not be the ones to establish charting criteria; as with Parachute Jumping Areas, the charting offices need to be told which areas to publish and they, in turn will develop the charting specifications. She agreed with Chris that Flight Standards should be the office establishing publication criteria.

Chris reiterated that the office responsible for submitting the information for entry into NASR must be established. Valerie originally agreed to contact AFS-800 and attempt to work with them to obtain the information which is deemed necessary for charting/publication. After the meeting Chris Criswell accepted this I.O.U.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Chris Criswell, AJV-22, will get in touch with the Service Area representatives and generate a list of current Aerobatic Areas that exist within the NAS.

ACTION: Chris Criswell, AJV-22, will work with AFS-800 to establish publication/charting criteria for Aerobatic Areas.

MEETING 14-01

Chris Criswell, AJV-22, stated that since the last ACF, he has been in contact with Sue Gardner, AFS-800, who is part of a group working to verify the Aerobatic Practice Areas that are currently published in the Special Notices section of the AFD. Chris stated that aerobatic areas are contained in a database which exists within AFS-800. An effort has also begun within the working group to establish criteria for future publication and charting of Aerobatic Practice Areas. Chris expressed Sue's interest in a future meeting with AIM and AJV-3 regarding the establishment of publication/charting criteria.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Chris Criswell, AJV-22, will continue to work with AFS-800 to establish a list of current Aerobatic Areas and to establish publication/charting criteria for these areas.

MEETING 14-02

Mike Wallin, AJV-211, [briefed the issue](#). Mike stated that he has met with Susan Gardner, AFS-800, regarding this issue. AFS-800 and AJV-211 are working together to collect the data (lateral parameters, altitudes, times of use, contact information) on the long term Aerobatic Training Areas (ATAs) in the U.S. and to devise charting/publication criteria for them. AFS-800 will determine which areas are to be depicted on the VFR charts and which are to be published only in the AFD. Mike also reported that AJV-211 will be contacting the AFD team to investigate the possibility of creation of a separate table in the AFD similar to that used for the publication of parachute jumping areas. It is expected that an associated standard note will also be included in the AFD airport entry.

Mike reported that an average of 10 to 15 new aerobic areas are established and 5 are decommissioned annually. Most aerobic areas are within close proximity to an airport. As part of the publication criteria being discussed, the aerobic area will be identified in part by the nearest airport. It is proposed that aerobic areas would be represented by a chart symbol not unlike the symbols used for hang glider and ultralight activity. Each aerobic activity area location will have latitude and longitude information.

Mike added that initially, the aerobic area publication information will be distributed via NFDD add-on page, until such time as NASR can be updated to accommodate the data. The process to update NASR is expected to take approximately 12 months.

Mike reiterated that AFS-800 will assume responsibility for maintaining ATAs and submitting ATA information to NFDC for publication. Newly designated ATAs (which are established via waiver) are only valid for 2 years and have to be renewed upon expiration. AFS-800 will either inform NFDC that an area is to be deleted or has been renewed for another 2 years. ATA changes will be submitted from AFS-800 to NFDC via an online digital form, which NFDC expects to have ready by the summer of 2015. FAA Order 7900.3, which is currently being drafted by NFDC, will include the form and instructions on the submission process.

John Moore, Jeppesen, inquired as to who will be responsible for guaranteeing the Flight Standards established ATA criteria is adhered to and how the data will be verified. Mike replied that AFS-800 will be the authoritative source for ATAs and that NFDC will publish them as submitted. Original requests may still go through the FSDO and then to AFS-800. All requests for ATAs will be validated by AFS-800 before they are submitted to NFDC for publication.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Mike Wallin, AJV-211, to continue working with AFS-800 to finalize charting and AFD publication criteria for ATAs.

ACTION: Rick Fecht, AJV-3213, will supply Mike Wallin a list of those Aerobic Training Areas that currently exist on the VFR Charts and in the AFD for AFS-800 assessment.

ACTION: Rick Fecht, AJV-3213, will begin work on developing an ATA symbol for the visual charts.

MEETING 15-01

Mike Wallin, AJV-5331, briefed the issue. Mike stated that AFS-800 has determined that there are 173 Aerobic Training Areas (ATAs) that warrant publication on VFR charts. AFS-800 is still working to finalize the data and forward it to NFDC so that publication can begin. Mike also stated that since the last ACF, the VFR charting team has developed a symbol for the depiction of ATAs on VFR charts. The new symbol will be placed in the approximate center of the area where operations are conducted. It is planned that supporting detailed Aerobic Training Area information will be published in the Notices section of the Airport/Facility Directories (AFD) as well as a standard note in the airport entry.

Valerie Watson, AJV-553, stated that the IACC Requirement Document for the proposed symbol has been prepared and is ready to be presented to the MPOC.

Mike stated that once the specification for the symbol is in place, an incremental implementation will begin. Mike is working with Bob Carlson, AJV-5641, and Rick Fecht, AJV-5223, on the implementation plan.

Ted Thompson, Jeppesen, inquired as to when this information will be databased in NASR. Mike stated that initially, the locations will be published in the NFDD as add-on pages. NASR is being updated to create a Miscellaneous Activity Area section that will house these areas, Ultralight Activity Areas, Glider Activity Areas, etc. Once this is complete, ATAs will be entered into NASR.

STATUS: CLOSED