AERONAUTICAL CHARTING FORUM
Charting Group
Meeting 13-01 – April 24-25, 2013

RECOMMENDATION DOCUMENT

FAA Control # ACF-CG RD 13-01-262

Subject: Airport Facility Directory (AFD) Depiction of Traffic Pattern Altitudes

Background/Discussion:
Many years ago, the standard traffic patterns at airports was 800' AGL. The FAA has published in the Aeronautical Information Manual a recommended traffic pattern of 1000' AGL This is only referenced in figure 4-3-2:

EXAMPLE-
Key to traffic pattern operations

1. Enter pattern in level flight, abeam the midpoint of the runway, at pattern altitude. (1,000' AGL is recommended pattern altitude unless established otherwise. . .)

Sometimes traffic pattern altitudes appear in the A/FD, sometimes they do not.

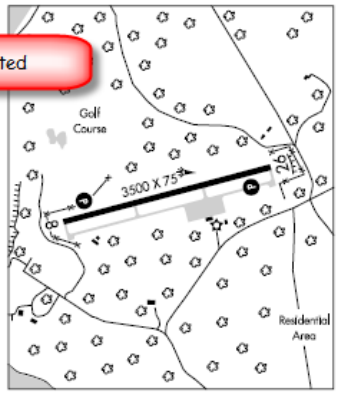
Recommendations:

1. Publish all traffic pattern altitudes or
2. Only publish those traffic pattern altitudes that are non-standard, i.e. different than 1000' AGL.

* See example on next page.

MACKINAC ISLAND (MCD) 1 NW UTC−5(−4DT) N45°51.90′ W84°38.24′ — LAKE HURON
739 B TPA—2639 (1900) NOTAM FILE MCD — L–31B
RWY 08–26: H3500X75 (ASPH–PFC) S-13 MIRL 0.4% up E — IAP
RWY 08: REIL. PAPI(P4L)—GA 3.5° TCH 20′. Trees.
RWY 26: REIL. PAPI(P4L)—GA 3.8° TCH 38′. Trees.
AIRPORT REMARKS: Attended 1300–2200Z‡. Noise a
procedures: Tfc pattern altitude 1900′ MSL; cli
before turning; avoid flight over shore and town; no touch and go
ldgs. Birds on and invof arpt. Flocks of seagulls invof landfill 0.3
miles NE. Rwy 08–26 slopes up from E to W. Rwy 08 and Rwy 26
PAPI unusable byd 5° left of centerline. ACTIVATE MIRL Rwy
08–26 and PAPI Rwys 08 and 26 and REIL Rwys 08 and
26—122.8. Ldg fee.
WEATHER DATA SOURCES: AWOS–3 118.275 (906) 847–3778.
COMMUNICATIONS: CTAF/UNICOM 122.7
Ⓡ MINNEAPOLIS CENTER APP/DEP CON 134.6
RADIO AIDS TO NAVIGATION: NOTAM FILE PLN.
PELLSTON (L) VORTACW 111.8 PLN Chan 55 N45°37.84′
W84°39.85′ 011° 14.1 NM to fld. 840/6W. HIWAS.
COMM/NAV/WEATHER REMARKS: AWOS–3 visibility unreliable.

TPA depicted



MACKINAC ISLAND N45°53.48′ W84°44.09′ — LAKE HURON
RCO 122.35 (GREEN BAY RADIO) at Mackinac Co. — L–31B

MADDS N42°29.69′ W83°05.60′ NOTAM FILE DET. — DETROIT
NDB (LOM) 338 DE 149° 6.3 NM to Coleman A. Young Muni. Unmonitored.

MAIDENS (See WILLIAMSTON)

MALLY N42°07.61′ W86°18.80′ NOTAM FILE BEH. — CHICAGO
NDB (LOM) 397 BE 274° 5.1 NM to Southwest Michigan Rgnl. Unmonitored.

MANCELONA MUNI (D9Ø) 2 N UTC−5(−4DT) N44°55.50′ W85°04.00′ — GREEN BAY
1133 NOTAM FILE LAN
RWY 18–36: 3400X140 (TURF)
RWY 18: Trees. RWY 36: Tree.
RWY 10–28: 2050X120 (TURF)
RWY 10: Thld dsplcd 830′. Trees. RWY 28: Thld dsplcd 200′. Tree.
AIRPORT REMARKS: Unattended. Arpt CLOSED when snow covered and Nov thru Apr 15 rwys not plowed. Rwy 18–36 and Rwy 10–28 marked with 3′ yellow cones.
COMMUNICATIONS: CTAF 122.9

No TPA depicted

MANCHESTER
ROSSETTIE (75G) 3 N UTC−5(−4DT) N42°11.70′ W84°01.85′ — DETROIT COPTER
1005 NOTAM FILE LAN
RWY 18–36: 2480X100 (TURF) LIRL (NSTD)
RWY 18: Trees. RWY 36: Thld dsplcd 665′. Road. Rgt tfc.
AIRPORT REMARKS: Attended irregularly. Field gets muddy in spring. Rwy on rolling terrain. Rwy 18–36 NSTD LIRL due to spacing. Rwy 18–36 marked with 2′ yellow cones and painted tires.
COMMUNICATIONS: CTAF 122.9

Comments:

Submitted by: Randy Coller
Organization: **Michigan DOT – Airports Division**
Phone: 517-335-8521
E-mail: collerr@michigan.gov
Date: March 4, 2013

MEETING 13-01: Valerie Watson, AJV-3B, briefed the topic on behalf of the submitter. Valerie stated that currently the FAA is not consistent in reporting traffic pattern altitudes (TPA) in the AFDs. In the past, the FAA only reported TPAs when they were other than 1000 feet above ground level (AGL). Now, there are a large number of 1000 ft AGL traffic pattern altitudes reported, especially in certain parts of the country. If even the standard is reported, what does this mean for airports without a published TPA? Valerie reported that the AFD data is pulled directly from NASR. If there is a value in the NASR TPA field, it will be published in the AFD. In her view, a decision needs to be made at the data level (NASR) whether ALL TPAs will be databased & published, or if they will only be published by exception to the 1000 ft AGL standard. She asked the group for input.

John Moore commented that the TPA altitude of 1000 ft AGL is only a recommendation, not a specified standard. Valerie restated her question – should the FAA publish all TPAs or only those in exception to the recommended 1000 ft AGL?

Lev Prichard, APA, suggested that only those airports that have TPAs other than that recommended in the AIM be published. Lev emphasized that the FAA AIM guidance on TPAs is what pilots have to refer to in knowing what is considered the standard TPA of 1000 AGL at an airport. There was general agreement to this position.

Curtis Davis, AJV-21, stated he was unaware of current NASR practice, but would research and report back.

It was the general recommendation of the group that NASR only database TPAs that differ from the recommended 1000 ft AGL. Pilots, when no TPA is published, will revert to that recommended.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Curtis Davis, AJV-21, will research to determine if NASR is putting in the recommend TPA of 1000 feet AGL for all airport entries and will report back on the findings at the next ACF.

MEETING ACF 13-02:

Valerie Watson, AJV-3, reviewed the topic. Chris Criswell, AJV-22, provided an update on actions taken since the last ACF. Chris stated that in discussions with the FAA Office of Airports, AAS-100, the FAA Form 5010 is the source for all traffic pattern altitudes. What appears on the 5010 is the responsibility of the Office of the Airports. Chris stated that NASR ingests the 5010 information, databases it and then disseminates the data as submitted. Chris emphasized that NASR will not edit or adjust data submitted and that to truly fix the issue, the 5010 will need to be altered/modified.

Brad Rush, AJV-3, stated that the last time the FAA Order 5010.4 Airport Safety Data Program, was revised was 1981. Brad added that the Order/Forms only require the airport to identify airports that have nonstandard traffic patterns. There is no requirement in the current order to provide 1000' pattern altitude information.

Valerie stated that apparently the Office of Airports is NOT reporting only nonstandard pattern altitudes, as there are numerous instances of the recommended 1000' traffic pattern altitudes in NASR and these values presumably came from the 5010 source.

A discussion followed, with one solution being, that since NASR databases some standard pattern altitudes, but not all, the Airport Facility Directory team could cull the 1000' traffic pattern altitudes out manually.

Bob Carlson, AJV-322, commented that such an approach would require the AFD team to vet all data published in the AFD, thereby losing the production efficiency gains made by the recent automation of the publication.

Rich Boll, NBAA, reminded the audience that while GA aircraft generally fly a standard pattern altitude of 1000' above ground level (AGL), that altitude is primarily for single engine, piston aircraft. Twin engine and turbine powered aircraft have a standard pattern altitude of 1500' AGL, as referenced in the AIM – Paragraph 4-3-3. Rich inquired as to how those other standard altitudes are handled in the 5010. Rich added that if the data is going to be captured that "we" (i.e. the General Aviation community) will want to see them as separate attributes in the AFD and to not have the information buried within the remarks section of an airport entry.

John Collins, GA Pilot, inquired as why the AFD team couldn't put something in the AFD that states that standard GA recommended altitude is 1000'.

Valerie responded by stating that this type of information is referenced in the AIM and that the AFD is not the place where pilots should be looking for such guidance material.

Chris reemphasized that the big issue is the data itself and the need to have the right data entered into the system.

The consensus of attendees was that ALL traffic pattern altitudes should be collected by the Office of Airports, databased in NASR and published in the AFD. Support for this decision was strengthened in light of the fact that the "recommended" or "nonstandard" altitude differs depending on aircraft type.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Chris Criswell, AJV-22, will work with Office of Airports to collect ALL traffic pattern altitudes. Chris will report at the next ACF.

MEETING 14-01:

Chris Criswell, AJV-22, reported that, per ACF recommendation, all traffic pattern altitudes, standard and non-standard, will be added into NASR for all airports. This will be a day forward implementation beginning in July 2014.

Valerie Watson, AJV-3, stated that this issue will remain open pending implementation.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Chris Criswell, AVJ-22, will report on the progress of populating all traffic pattern altitudes at the next ACF.

MEETING 14-02

Valerie Watson, AJV-344, briefed the previous ACF consensus that ALL traffic pattern altitudes, whether considered “standard” or “recommended”, should be both captured in the NASR database and published in the AFDs. Steve Brisbon, AJV-211, briefed that NFDC has not yet begun the process of populating all traffic pattern altitudes in NASR. Steve will follow up and attempt to expedite the project.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Steve Brisbon, AJV-211, to report back on the progress in populating all Traffic Pattern Altitudes in NASR.

MEETING 15-01

Valerie Watson, AJV-553, reviewed the issue. Mike Wallin, AJV-5331, stated that NFDC is still working this issue. Valerie asked Mike if there is a new policy to collect all Traffic Pattern Altitude (TPA) data, whether standard or not, and populate the information in NASR. Mike was not sure if that policy was in place and committed to looking into the issue further and reporting at the next ACF.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Mike Wallin, AJV-5331, to report on progress in population of all Traffic Pattern Altitudes in NASR.

MEETING 15-02

Valerie Watson, AJV-553, reviewed the issue. Rick Mayhew, AJV-533, stated that the past policy was to populate the NASR Traffic Pattern Altitude (TPA) data field only when the traffic pattern is other than standard. Rick reported that NFDC is ready to populate all TPAs, however they first need to secure a source for the data.

Valerie asked if the data is populated on the 5010 form and whether NFDC can use that as the source. Rick stated that they are only populated on this form if they are "other than standard". He suggested that since the standard is subject to confusion and misinterpretation, NFDC could ask the airport inspectors who fill out the 5010 forms to begin to populate this field for all altitudes.

Rick accepted the commitment to engage with the Office of Airports for a source for this data.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Rick Mayhew, AJV-533, to report on dialog with the Office of Airports and Airport Inspectors regarding securing a source for all Traffic Pattern Altitudes in NASR.

MEETING 16-01

Valerie Watson, FAA/AJV-553, reviewed the issue. Rick Mayhew, FAA/AJV-5331, stated that of the 19,585 runways databased in NASR, 1,191 of have published Traffic Pattern Altitudes (TPAs) in NASR. Rick reviewed how the FAA gathers TPAs. He stated that FAA Form 7480 (see Slide #6), owned by the Office of Airports, is the form that is the source for populating the NASR database with TPA information. Rick stated that the Office of Airports only fills out the field for TPAs when the traffic pattern is "non-standard". Because of the lack of a firm definition of what is "standard" or "recommended", Rick made the recommendation to the Office of Airports that the TPA box be filled in every time. Rick reported that Chris Criswell, FAA/AAS-100, had stated to him that his office recognizes there is a gap in the information and will work with Rick to address the issue.

Lev Prichard, APA, agreed that the AIM definition for a standard traffic pattern altitudes IS confusing. He suggested that this issue could be resolved by cleaning up the AIM definition. Bob Lamond, NBAA, agreed and offered to help Lev revise the AIM guidance. Valerie stated that if the definition for "standard" or "recommended" is made clear in the AIM, the FAA could reasonably retain the policy of only publishing *other* than standard or recommended.

Scott Jerdan, FAA/AJV-533, agreed. The best solution is to clean up the AIM definition to better define standard TPAs and then only publish those that are non-standard.

Tony Lawson, FAA/AJV-5441, cited several other FAA publications where traffic pattern altitude guidance is published. He emphasized that when the AIM definition is clarified, the other FAA publications will need to be updated accordingly.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Lev Prichard, APA, and Bob Lamond, NBAA, to work on clarification of the AIM guidance for Traffic Pattern Altitudes.

MEETING 16-02

Valerie Watson, FAA/AJV-553, reviewed the issue. Rich Boll, NBAA, presented draft Aeronautical Information Manual (AIM) guidance for the audience to review. The draft guidance defines recommended traffic pattern altitudes (TPA) with much more clarity. Rune Duke, AOPA, expressed his support for the revised text.

Lev Prichard, APA, also supportive, commented that misunderstanding traffic pattern altitudes is a pilot education problem and the new AIM guidance will be helpful.

Valerie asked the audience if, once the new AIM guidance is published and the definition for standard (recommended) TPA is published in the Legend of the Chart Supplement, would it be sufficient if only TPAs that are an *exception to the standard* were published. The group agreed that this would be acceptable. Valerie further clarified that this means that only non-standard TPAs would be databased in the source database (NASR) and published in the Chart Supplement airport entries. The audience concurred.

Scott Jerdan, FAA/AJV-533, expressed his concern for ensuring a source for the TPA information. Historically, this data has been collected on FAA Form 7480-1, Notice of Landing Area Proposal, the Office of Responsibility for which is the Office of Airports, FAA/AAS-100. Scott stated that the National Flight Data Center (NFDC) will coordinate with the Office of Airports to ensure a conduit for the collection and maintenance of this information. Chris Criswell, FAA/AAS-100, agreed to coordinate with NFDC. Chris and Scott will work out a process.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Scott Jerdan, FAA/AJV-533, and Chris Criswell, FAA/AAS-100, will coordinate to ensure the proper collection and maintenance of TPA information in NASR.

ACTION: Valerie Watson, FAA/AJV-553, and Rich Boll, NBAA, will work to get the revised language published in the AIM.

ACTION: Valerie Watson, FAA/AJV-553, will draft a specification change to define a standard Traffic Pattern Altitude and the chart-by-exception policy in the Chart Supplement Legend.

MEETING 17-01

Meeting was cancelled.

MEETING 17-02

Valerie Watson, FAA/AJV-553, reviewed the topic and the past decision by the ACF that only non-standard Traffic Pattern Altitudes (TPAs) should be published in the source (NASR) database and in the Chart Supplement. She shared that the revisions to the TPA language that was agreed upon by the ACF is expected to be published in the 29 March 2018 version of the AIM.

Rick Mayhew, FAA/AJV-533, stated that after the revised and clarified AIM language has been published, the National Flight Data Center (NFDC) will remove all "standard" TPAs from the source database (NASR), which will in turn automatically remove them from the Chart Supplement airport entries (this attribute of the Supplement is pulled directly from NASR). Valerie asked how long the NASR cleanup is expected to take. Rick responded that it may take several cycles. Rick then shared that the NFDC's source for TPA information is FAA 7480-1 Form, Notice of Landing Area Proposal.

Scott Jerdan, FAA/AJV-533, stated that he would like to see revisions to the FAA FORM 7480-1; first to indicate whether the TPA is standard or non-standard and second to accommodate multiple TPAs for different aircraft types. Rick and Scott committed to working with the Office of Airports to make changes to the form to ensure that either only non-standard TPAs are reported or that the form clearly indicates standard/non-standard, and that Box 4 of the form to be expanded to accommodate multiple TPAs for different kinds of aircraft.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Valerie Watson, FAA/AJV-553, will report on the status of the publication of the revised AIM language and work to revise the Chart Supplement TPA explanatory text.

ACTION: Scott Jerdan, FAA/AJV-533, will coordinate a NASR cleanup to ensure that only non-standard TPAs are listed in the database. This cleanup can begin after the publication of the revised AIM language.

ACTION: Rick Mayhew and Scott Jerdan, FAA/AJV-533, will work with the Office of Airports to make changes to FAA Form 7480-1, Notice of Landing Area Proposal to clarify collection of TPA information.

MEETING 18-01

Valerie Watson, FAA/AJV-553, reviewed the issue. She stated that the revised and clarified Traffic Pattern Altitude (TPA) guidance previously agreed to by the ACF audience was published in the 29 Mar 2018 edition of the Aeronautical Information Manual (AIM).

Scott Jerdan, FAA/AJV-533, then provided an update on the progress the National Flight Data Center (NFDC) has made verifying TPA information and removing "standard" TPAs from the National Airspace System Resources (NASR) database. Scott commented that once the process had begun, it became clear that it would prove more complicated and time-consuming than originally thought. John Johnson, FAA/AJV-5332, said that NFDC needs to reach out to over 1,800 airports to verify their TPA information. Scott stated that the project has been prioritized and is moving forward with an anticipated completion date by the end of this calendar year.

Rick Mayhew, FAA/AJV-533, reported that since the last meeting, he has reached out to the Office of Airports regarding the proposed changes needed on FAA Form 7480-1, Notice of Landing Area Proposal, to clarify the collection of TPA information. He has had no response as yet, but will continue his communication with the Office of Airports and will report progress at the next meeting. NFDC would like to see the form expanded to accommodate multiple TPAs for differing aircraft types and indications of "standard" or "recommended" TPA entries.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Scott Jerdan, FAA/AJV-533, will coordinate the continued NASR update to ensure that only non-standard TPAs are listed in the database.

ACTION: Rick Mayhew, FAA/AJV-533, will work with the Office of Airports to promulgate changes to FAA Form 7480-1, Notice of Landing Area Proposal, to clarify collection of TPA information.

MEETING 18-02

Rick Mayhew, FAA/AJV-533, reviewed the history of this item, the purpose of which is to only publish Traffic Pattern Altitudes (TPA) in National Airspace System Resource (NASR) and the Chart Supplement when they differ from the "recommended" (or "standard") altitudes as published in the Aeronautical Information Manual (AIM).

John Johnson, FAA/AJV-5332, reported that work continues to remove recommended TPA entries from the NASR database. He said that there were over 1800 airports with TPAs and about 1000 of those appeared to be what the AIM describes as recommended altitudes. Of those, the National Flight Data Center (NFDC) team have verified and cleaned up approximately 800. John stated that NFDC is on track to finish the NASR clean up by the end of 2018.

Valerie Watson, FAA/AJV-553, reported that when the NASR cleanup is complete, AJV-5 will publish explanatory text in the front of the Chart Supplement to explain that only TPAs that are an exception to the recommended altitudes in the AIM will be published.

Rick stated that his action item to work with the Office of Airports to make changes to FAA Form 7480-1, Notice of Landing Area Proposal, to support multiple TPAs is ongoing and that he will continue that endeavor.

As update of the 7480-1 form is an accessory activity not necessary to the original proposal and as the NASR update will be completed by the end of 2018, Valerie recommended that this issue be closed. The group agreed.

STATUS: CLOSED