

AERONAUTICAL CHARTING FORUM
Charting Group
Meeting 14-01 – April 29- May 1, 2014

RECOMMENDATION DOCUMENT

FAA Control # ACF-CG RD 14-01-277

Subject: Discontinuation of World Aeronautical Chart (WAC) Chart

Background/Discussion:

Following the FAA Strategic Initiatives, AeroNav Products must rigorously analyze our suite of products and stop doing those things that no longer are in demand from the public or have become obsolete due to technological advances. By right sizing our portfolio we can lay the foundation for a sustainable NAS of the future by leveraging technology we will deliver the benefits of more efficient products.

Observe WAC Sales Data Trends. (Compare to other chart series sales trends.)

The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency has stopped ordering the WAC product series for its customers (military services). They report that the services utilize the Sectional Aeronautical Chart in the US and electronic flight bag (EFB).

EFB moving map technology (seamless charting) is now readily and economically available to general aviation through a number of commercial interests.

Underlying charts continue to portray the aeronautical information in the US where this recommendation is applicable.

Recommendations:

Except where obligated by international agreement or where US territory doesn't have sufficient alternative chart coverage, discontinue the World Aeronautical Chart (WAC).

Comments:

This is the first public forum discussing this initiative. Several internal FAA assessments are still underway on this topic.

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Date: April 4, 2014

ACF 14-01:

Ron Haag, AJV-321, [briefed this issue](#) on behalf of FAA AeroNav Products, VFR Charting. Ron emphasized at the beginning of his briefing that the recommendation for the discontinuation of the WACs is only in the initial stages of consideration. Ron added that the purpose of bringing this topic to the ACF is to gather user input.

Ron outlined the reasons the FAA is investigating the possibility of discontinuing the publication of the WAC, including; the availability of digital Visual Charts, the expanding use of devices such as iPads and Electronic Flight Bags, the loss of NGA as key purchaser, and an overall decline in printed chart subscribers. Ron commented that the decline in the paper sales of the WAC charts has been more rapid than other FAA Charting products. Ron also stated that there is duplicate coverage on the Sectional Charts in all but a very limited area. The proposal is to discontinue the WACs, except where obligated by international agreement, or in areas that do not have sufficient alternate VFR (Sectional) coverage. Ron then opened the floor to user comments.

John Kernaghan, NBAA, commented that FAR Part 135 operators are required to have Visual charts in the cockpit and he felt that some pilots choose to carry the WACs because a single WAC covers a great deal more geographical area than a Sectional chart. He said he will poll some of NBAA's membership to determine the level of demand for the WACs.

George Sempes, AOV-310, stated that the WACs are a required product by ICAO and the US would have to file a difference if they are discontinued.

John Moore, Jeppesen, asked about the international agreements and the requirements of those agreements. Ron responded that his office is looking into that issue. John then stated that despite the decline in sales, there are still a sizable number of users that still purchase the WACs. He suggested that the FAA try to determine who those users are and if the available alternatives would be suitable for those users.

Melissa McCaffrey, AOPA, commented that many pilots may be using the WACs for flight planning purposes. She asked if there would be a public comment period. Ron responded that yes, there would be outreach and time for public comment.

Bruce McGray, AFS-410, suggested that the original intent of the WACs be reviewed to ensure that the original requirements are being met by other products. Bruce also inquired as to whether the proposal would be open to formal comment. Ron reiterated that yes, a public comment period would be provided.

Jay Jackson, AJV-222, suggested that coverage of the sectional charts could be expanded to meet the geographical requirements. Ron responded that expansion of the Sectional chart coverage would probably prove cost prohibitive.

Valerie Watson, AJV-3, asked Melissa if she could poll the AOPA membership to gather feedback on the impacts of discontinuing the WACs. Melissa responded that she would coordinate with Ron and begin doing some regional outreach.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Ron Haag, AJV-321, will take the comments received at the ACF back to the VFR charting team management, will seek a venue for public comment and will report back at the next ACF.

ACTION: Melissa McCaffrey, AOPA, will coordinate with Ron Haag, AJV-321, to begin to gather feedback from the AOPA membership and report back at the next ACF.

MEETING 14-02

Ron Haag, AJV-3212, reviewed the topic. Ron reported that his office submitted the Federal Register Notice in July to address AeroNav Products' proposal to discontinue the WACs. The Notice has not yet been published. Until the Federal Register Notice is published and comments are received, this issue is on hold.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Ron Haag, AJV-3212, will report back on the Federal Register Notice at next ACF.

MEETING 15-01:

Rick Fecht, AJV-5223, reviewed the topic. Rick reported that the Federal Register Notice to address the proposal to discontinue the WACs has yet to be released. The Notice is still under review by FAA Legal, but it is anticipated that it will be released soon. Until the Federal Register Notice is published and comments are received, disposition of the WAC charts remains on hold.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Rick Fecht, AJV-5223, will report back on the Federal Register Notice at next ACF.

MEETING 15-02:

Guy Copeland, AJV-522, reviewed the topic. [Guy reviewed the history of](#) the World Aeronautical Charts (WACs), illustrating how demand for the WACs over the past few years has been declining to levels that no longer make it economically viable to continue production of the chart series. Guy added that contributing factors to the decline of the WACs was the migration to digital charts, use of electronic flight bags (EFBs), moving map displays and other related technologies.

Based on feedback, Guy stated that there was a notice of the policy change published in the Federal Register announcing the elimination of the entire WAC series and soliciting questions and comments from users. He stated that the Visual Charting Team

will be able to redirect resources previously dedicated to WAC production to other Visual charting initiatives.

Guy stated that the proposal to mitigate the loss of the WACs is to develop an Alaskan VFR Wall Planning chart and produce two Caribbean VFR charts to provide coverage in those areas. Regarding concerns for Mexican and Canadian areas that were previously covered by the WACs, Guy stated that pilots will be encouraged to use foreign, state-sponsored aeronautical charts when navigating in those regions. Canadian and Mexican charts exist and are commercially available.

Projected dates for WACs discontinuance were provided, subject to change.

Rune Duke, AOPA, stated that they disagreed with the FAA's publication of an announcement to discontinue a chart series without the opportunity for formal public comment. Subsequent to publication of the announcement, AOPA conducted a survey of their members and 745 responded that they valued and utilized the WAC charts. AOPA has been working with the FAA to establish a collaborative process on addressing the charting concerns and needs of pilots. AOPA looks forward to continuing that collaborative process as the FAA works through the process of discontinuing the WACs.

Rich Boll, NBAA, inquired if all of the U.S., including Alaska, is covered by a VFR sectional chart. Guy responded that yes, the U.S. and Alaska are covered by the VFR sectional charts.

Rich then emphasized that the regulations require that transport aircraft have both IFR and VFR charts in order to operate in accordance with the regulations, specifically [14 CFR 91.503](#) (a)(4). The regulation requires operators of these aircraft to carry pertinent aeronautical charts, a purpose for which the WAC product is uniquely suited. While Sectional charts meet this need, the number that must be carried on the airplane becomes problematic. As result, NBAA is concerned about the loss of the WAC series of charts to their members.

Rich went on to state that one key issue that pilots face with the use of current digital VFR and IFR charts is that they are stitched together by 3rd party charting application providers. Along the boundaries where charts are jointed, charted information sometimes gets missed, dropped or deleted entirely. He emphasized that these data losses are a huge issue. Rich suggested that the FAA look into generating one continuous digital VFR aeronautical chart for viewing on EFBs. NBAA would like to see the funds freed up by the discontinuance of the WACs be put towards generating a seamless electronic VFR chart.

Guy, in response, stated that VFR charts are currently still a paper product. The digital products are a snapshot of the paper product. Guy also stated that the FAA is working toward data driven charts which may solve many of these issues. Rich responded that digital charts are a long term goal and stated that something is needed in the interim.

Guy stated that he would take the recommendation back for further discussion, but in the meantime, the FAA is working on the stitching issues. He explained that work has begun to clean up areas on the paper charts where they are jointed to help ensure that information is not lost.

Valerie Watson, AJV-553, asked if FAA Enroute Charting is aware these types of overlap and data loss issues with adjoining charts, and if so, if they are they looking into it. Bob Gifford, AJV-5211, stated that he was not aware of the problem, but would enquire.

Steve Woodbury, Flight Safety International, asked if there were plans to update guidance regarding the discontinuation of the WACs. Guy responded that all current references to the WAC series will be removed from the December 2015 version of the Aeronautical Information Manual (AIM). A future AIM update will include information regarding the new VFR products under development.

Rune inquired if the FAA has plans to provide information to pilots regarding which VFR Sectionals would cover the discontinued WACs. Guy replied that he there was currently not a plan to provide such a graphic, but that VFR Charting will look into producing a textual crosswalk charting notice that will correlate WAC coverage to Sectional chart coverage. Subsequent to the meeting, the following Notice was posted on the AIS website: http://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/flight_info/aeronav/safety_alerts/media/VIS_15-04_CN_WAC_to_Sectional_Crosswalk.pdf

Bob Lamond, NBAA, stated that the process for the discontinuation of the WACs did not occur as expected and as it was publicly announced. Bob emphasized that while the WACs may not be heavily used, they still have value. He encouraged the FAA to continue to discuss and work with industry to find solutions to these issues, especially regarding areas that directly impact how operators are to comply with elements of the regulations that require charts in the cockpit. NBAA understands the cost involved in producing the WACs. Pending the development of a robust, data-driven VFR chart option that is an acceptable alternative to the Sectional chart, NBAA believes that the loss of the WAC is best addressed by furnishing EFB software providers with a mosaic product that is suitable to their use. Bob added that NBAA believes this holds true not only for VFR charts, but for IFR charts as well. This would serve as good alternative pending the full, data-driven chart option.

Bob expressed that NBAA and AOPA's comments represent frustration from pilots about removal of products and tools without a suitable alternative or acceptable electronic replacement. Al Ball, Netjets, echoed this sentiment. Both Rune and Bob stated that their organizations hope to continue working with the FAA to improve the services and products to meet the needs of pilots. Guy replied that the FAA is engaged and also wants to work collaboratively.

STATUS: CLOSED