



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Aviation  
Administration**

800 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20591

May 11, 2015

Exemption No. 11530  
Regulatory Docket No. FAA-2015-0346

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Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Mr. Winton:

This letter is to inform you that we have granted your request for exemption. It transmits our decision, explains its basis, and gives you the conditions and limitations of the exemption, including the date it ends.

By letter dated February 5, 2015, you petitioned the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on behalf of Leading Edge Associates, Inc. (hereinafter petitioner or operator) for an exemption. The petitioner requested to operate an unmanned aircraft system (UAS) to conduct aerial acquisitions and research.

See Appendix A for the petition submitted to the FAA describing the proposed operations and the regulations that the petitioner seeks an exemption.

The FAA has determined that good cause exists for not publishing a summary of the petition in the Federal Register because the requested exemption would not set a precedent, and any delay in acting on this petition would be detrimental to the petitioner. The FAA received four comments from county governments in support of the petition, three comments from groups and associations in support of the petition, two individual comments in support of the petition and one comment from the NAAA in opposition to the petition. In granting this exemption, the FAA has determined that the proposed operations can safely be conducted under the conditions and limitations of this exemption. As with exemptions issued to Aeryon Lab, Astraeus Aerial, Clayco, Inc., and VDOS Global, LLC, failure to comply with the document's conditions and limitations is grounds for immediate suspension or rescission of the exemption.

## **Airworthiness Certification**

The UAS proposed by the petitioner is a Leading Edge PrecisionVision 10

In accordance with the statutory criteria provided in Section 333 of Public Law 112–95 in reference to 49 U.S.C. § 44704, and in consideration of the size, weight, speed, and limited operating area associated with the aircraft and its operation, the Secretary of Transportation has determined that this aircraft meets the conditions of Section 333. Therefore, the FAA finds that relief from 14 CFR part 21, *Certification procedures for products and parts, Subpart H—Airworthiness Certificates*, and any associated noise certification and testing requirements of part 36, is not necessary.

## **The Basis for Our Decision**

You have requested to use a UAS for aerial data collection<sup>1</sup>. The FAA has issued grants of exemption in circumstances similar in all material respects to those presented in your petition. In Grants of Exemption Nos. 11062 to Astraeus Aerial (*see* Docket No. FAA–2014–0352), 11109 to Clayco, Inc. (*see* Docket No. FAA–2014–0507), 11112 to VDOS Global, LLC (*see* Docket No. FAA–2014–0382), and 11213 to Aeryon Labs, Inc. (*see* Docket No. FAA–2014–0642), the FAA found that the enhanced safety achieved using an unmanned aircraft (UA) with the specifications described by the petitioner and carrying no passengers or crew, rather than a manned aircraft of significantly greater proportions, carrying crew in addition to flammable fuel, gives the FAA good cause to find that the UAS operation enabled by this exemption is in the public interest.

Having reviewed your reasons for requesting an exemption, I find that—

- They are similar in all material respects to relief previously requested in Grant of Exemption Nos. 11062, 11109, 11112, and 11213;
- The reasons stated by the FAA for granting Exemption Nos. 11062, 11109, 11112, and 11213 also apply to the situation you present; and
- A grant of exemption is in the public interest.

## **Our Decision**

In consideration of the foregoing, I find that a grant of exemption is in the public interest. Therefore, pursuant to the authority contained in 49 U.S.C. 106(f), 40113, and 44701, delegated to me by the Administrator, Leading Edge Associates, Inc. is granted an exemption

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<sup>1</sup> Aerial data collection includes any remote sensing and measuring by an instrument(s) aboard the UA. Examples include imagery (photography, video, infrared, etc.), electronic measurement (precision surveying, RF analysis, etc.), chemical measurement (particulate measurement, etc.), or any other gathering of data by instruments aboard the UA.

from 14 CFR §§ 61.23(a) and (c), 61.101(e)(4) and (5), 61.113(a), 61.315(a), 91.7(a), 91.119(c), 91.121, 91.151(a)(1), 91.405(a), 91.407(a)(1), 91.409(a)(1) and (2), and 91.417(a) and (b), to the extent necessary to allow the petitioner to operate a UAS to perform aerial data collection. This exemption is subject to the conditions and limitations listed below.

### **Conditions and Limitations**

In this grant of exemption, Leading Edge Associates, Inc. is hereafter referred to as the operator.

Failure to comply with any of the conditions and limitations of this grant of exemption will be grounds for the immediate suspension or rescission of this exemption.

1. Operations authorized by this grant of exemption are limited to the Leading Edge PrecisionVision 10 when weighing less than 55 pounds including payload. Proposed operations of any other aircraft will require a new petition or a petition to amend this exemption.
2. Operations for the purpose of closed-set motion picture and television filming are not permitted.
3. The UA may not be operated at a speed exceeding 87 knots (100 miles per hour). The exemption holder may use either groundspeed or calibrated airspeed to determine compliance with the 87 knot speed restriction. In no case will the UA be operated at airspeeds greater than the maximum UA operating airspeed recommended by the aircraft manufacturer.
4. The UA must be operated at an altitude of no more than 400 feet above ground level (AGL). Altitude must be reported in feet AGL.
5. The UA must be operated within visual line of sight (VLOS) of the PIC at all times. This requires the PIC to be able to use human vision unaided by any device other than corrective lenses, as specified on the PIC's FAA-issued airman medical certificate or U.S. driver's license.
6. All operations must utilize a visual observer (VO). The UA must be operated within the visual line of sight (VLOS) of the PIC and VO at all times. The VO may be used to satisfy the VLOS requirement as long as the PIC always maintains VLOS capability. The VO and PIC must be able to communicate verbally at all times; electronic messaging or texting is not permitted during flight operations. The PIC must be designated before the flight and cannot transfer his or her designation for the duration of the flight. The PIC must ensure that the VO can perform the duties required of the VO.

7. This exemption and all documents needed to operate the UAS and conduct its operations in accordance with the conditions and limitations stated in this grant of exemption, are hereinafter referred to as the operating documents. The operating documents must be accessible during UAS operations and made available to the Administrator upon request. If a discrepancy exists between the conditions and limitations in this exemption and the procedures outlined in the operating documents, the conditions and limitations herein take precedence and must be followed. Otherwise, the operator must follow the procedures as outlined in its operating documents. The operator may update or revise its operating documents. It is the operator's responsibility to track such revisions and present updated and revised documents to the Administrator or any law enforcement official upon request. The operator must also present updated and revised documents if it petitions for extension or amendment to this grant of exemption. If the operator determines that any update or revision would affect the basis upon which the FAA granted this exemption, then the operator must petition for an amendment to its grant of exemption. The FAA's UAS Integration Office (AFS-80) may be contacted if questions arise regarding updates or revisions to the operating documents.
8. Any UAS that has undergone maintenance or alterations that affect the UAS operation or flight characteristics, e.g., replacement of a flight critical component, must undergo a functional test flight prior to conducting further operations under this exemption. Functional test flights may only be conducted by a PIC with a VO and must remain at least 500 feet from other people. The functional test flight must be conducted in such a manner so as to not pose an undue hazard to persons and property.
9. The operator is responsible for maintaining and inspecting the UAS to ensure that it is in a condition for safe operation.
10. Prior to each flight, the PIC must conduct a pre-flight inspection and determine the UAS is in a condition for safe flight. The pre-flight inspection must account for all potential discrepancies, e.g., inoperable components, items, or equipment. If the inspection reveals a condition that affects the safe operation of the UAS, the aircraft is prohibited from operating until the necessary maintenance has been performed and the UAS is found to be in a condition for safe flight.
11. The operator must follow the UAS manufacturer's maintenance, overhaul, replacement, inspection, and life limit requirements for the aircraft and aircraft components.
12. Each UAS operated under this exemption must comply with all manufacturer safety bulletins.
13. Under this grant of exemption, a PIC must hold either an airline transport, commercial, private, recreational, or sport pilot certificate. The PIC must also hold a

current FAA airman medical certificate or a valid U.S. driver's license issued by a state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, a territory, a possession, or the Federal government. The PIC must also meet the flight review requirements specified in 14 CFR § 61.56 in an aircraft in which the PIC is rated on his or her pilot certificate.

14. The operator may not permit any PIC to operate unless the PIC demonstrates the ability to safely operate the UAS in a manner consistent with how the UAS will be operated under this exemption, including evasive and emergency maneuvers and maintaining appropriate distances from persons, vessels, vehicles and structures. PIC qualification flight hours and currency must be logged in a manner consistent with 14 CFR § 61.51(b). Flights for the purposes of training the operator's PICs and VOs (training, proficiency, and experience-building) and determining the PIC's ability to safely operate the UAS in a manner consistent with how the UAS will be operated under this exemption are permitted under the terms of this exemption. However, training operations may only be conducted during dedicated training sessions. During training, proficiency, and experience-building flights, all persons not essential for flight operations are considered nonparticipants, and the PIC must operate the UA with appropriate distance from nonparticipants in accordance with 14 CFR § 91.119.
15. UAS operations may not be conducted during night, as defined in 14 CFR § 1.1. All operations must be conducted under visual meteorological conditions (VMC). Flights under special visual flight rules (SVFR) are not authorized.
16. The UA may not operate within 5 nautical miles of an airport reference point (ARP) as denoted in the current FAA Airport/Facility Directory (AFD) or for airports not denoted with an ARP, the center of the airport symbol as denoted on the current FAA-published aeronautical chart, unless a letter of agreement with that airport's management is obtained or otherwise permitted by a COA issued to the exemption holder. The letter of agreement with the airport management must be made available to the Administrator or any law enforcement official upon request.
17. The UA may not be operated less than 500 feet below or less than 2,000 feet horizontally from a cloud or when visibility is less than 3 statute miles from the PIC.
18. If the UAS loses communications or loses its GPS signal, the UA must return to a pre-determined location within the private or controlled-access property.
19. The PIC must abort the flight in the event of unpredicted obstacles or emergencies.
20. The PIC is prohibited from beginning a flight unless (considering wind and forecast weather conditions) there is enough available power for the UA to conduct the intended operation and to operate after that for at least five minutes or with the reserve power recommended by the manufacturer if greater.

21. Air Traffic Organization (ATO) Certificate of Waiver or Authorization (COA). All operations shall be conducted in accordance with an ATO-issued COA. The exemption holder may apply for a new or amended COA if it intends to conduct operations that cannot be conducted under the terms of the attached COA.
22. All aircraft operated in accordance with this exemption must be identified by serial number, registered in accordance with 14 CFR part 47, and have identification (N-Number) markings in accordance with 14 CFR part 45, Subpart C. Markings must be as large as practicable.
23. Documents used by the operator to ensure the safe operation and flight of the UAS and any documents required under 14 CFR §§ 91.9 and 91.203 must be available to the PIC at the Ground Control Station of the UAS any time the aircraft is operating. These documents must be made available to the Administrator or any law enforcement official upon request.
24. The UA must remain clear and give way to all manned aviation operations and activities at all times.
25. The UAS may not be operated by the PIC from any moving device or vehicle.
26. All Flight operations must be conducted at least 500 feet from all nonparticipating persons, vessels, vehicles, and structures unless:
  - a. Barriers or structures are present that sufficiently protect nonparticipating persons from the UA and/or debris in the event of an accident. The operator must ensure that nonparticipating persons remain under such protection. If a situation arises where nonparticipating persons leave such protection and are within 500 feet of the UA, flight operations must cease immediately in a manner ensuring the safety of nonparticipating persons; and
  - b. The owner/controller of any vessels, vehicles or structures has granted permission for operating closer to those objects and the PIC has made a safety assessment of the risk of operating closer to those objects and determined that it does not present an undue hazard.

The PIC, VO, operator trainees or essential persons are not considered nonparticipating persons under this exemption.

27. All operations shall be conducted over private or controlled-access property with permission from the property owner/controller or authorized representative. Permission from property owner/controller or authorized representative will be obtained for each flight to be conducted.
28. Any incident, accident, or flight operation that transgresses the lateral or vertical boundaries of the operational area as defined by the applicable COA must be reported

to the FAA's UAS Integration Office (AFS-80) within 24 hours. Accidents must be reported to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) per instructions contained on the NTSB Web site: [www.nts.gov](http://www.nts.gov).

If this exemption permits operations for the purpose of closed-set motion picture and television filming and production, the following additional conditions and limitations apply.

29. The operator must have a motion picture and television operations manual (MPTOM) as documented in this grant of exemption.
30. At least 3 days before aerial filming, the operator of the UAS affected by this exemption must submit a written Plan of Activities to the local Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) with jurisdiction over the area of proposed filming. The 3-day notification may be waived with the concurrence of the FSDO. The plan of activities must include at least the following:
  - a. Dates and times for all flights;
  - b. Name and phone number of the operator for the UAS aerial filming conducted under this grant of exemption;
  - c. Name and phone number of the person responsible for the on-scene operation of the UAS;
  - d. Make, model, and serial or N-Number of UAS to be used;
  - e. Name and certificate number of UAS PICs involved in the aerial filming;
  - f. A statement that the operator has obtained permission from property owners and/or local officials to conduct the filming production event; the list of those who gave permission must be made available to the inspector upon request;
  - g. Signature of exemption holder or representative; and
  - h. A description of the flight activity, including maps or diagrams of any area, city, town, county, and/or state over which filming will be conducted and the altitudes essential to accomplish the operation.
31. Flight operations may be conducted closer than 500 feet from participating persons consenting to be involved and necessary for the filming production, as specified in the exemption holder's MPTOM.

Unless otherwise specified in this grant of exemption, the UAS, the UAS PIC, and the UAS operations must comply with all applicable parts of 14 CFR including, but not limited to, parts 45, 47, 61, and 91.

This exemption terminates on May 31, 2017, unless sooner superseded or rescinded.

Sincerely,

/s/

John S. Duncan

Director, Flight Standards Service

Enclosures



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION  
WASHINGTON, DC

Regulatory Docket No. \_\_\_\_\_

**IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION FOR EXEMPTION OF:  
LEADING EDGE ASSOCIATES, INC.  
FOR AN EXEMPTION SEEKING RELIEF FROM THE REQUIREMENTS OF  
TITLE 14 OF THE CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS  
SECTIONS 61.113(a) & (b), 91.7(a), 91.121, 91.151(b), 91.405(a), 91.407(a)(1), 91.409(a)(1)  
& (a)(2), AND 91.417(a) & (b) CONCERNING COMMERCIAL OPERATION OF THE  
PRECISIONVISION 10 UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM  
PURSUANT TO SECTION 333 OF  
THE FAA MODERNIZATION AND REFORM ACT OF 2012 (PUBLIC LAW 112-95)**

Submitted on February 5, 2015

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## **GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AGL	Above Ground Level
AOI	Area of Interest
ATC	Air Traffic Control
ATO	Air Traffic Organization
AV	Aerial Vehicle
C.F.R.	Code of Federal Regulations
COA	Certificate of Authorization
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FAR	Federal Aviation Regulation
GCS	Ground Control Station
GPS	Global Positioning System
LOL	Loss of Link
NAS	National Airspace System
NOTAM	Notice to Airman
PIC	Pilot In Command
Section 333	FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 (FMRA) Section 333
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
UA	Unmanned Aircraft
UAS	Unmanned Aircraft System
VFR	Visual Flight Rules
VLOS	Visual Line of Site
VMC	Visual Meteorological Conditions
VO	Visual Observer
VTOL	Vertical Takeoff and Landing

## **SUMMARY**

Leading Edge Associates, Inc. seeks exemption from the requirements of 14 C.F.R §§ 61.113(a) & (b), 91.7(a), 91.121, 91.151(b), 91.405(a), 91.407(a)(1), 91.409(a)(1) & (a)(2), and 91.417(a) & (b), to operate an Unmanned Aircraft System pursuant to Section 333 of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 (FMRA). This exemption will permit Leading Edge Associates, Inc. to operate an Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) for the commercial purpose of conducting aerial acquisitions and research over certain rural areas of the United States.

## **INTRODUCTION AND INTERESTS OF THE PETITIONER**

Leading Edge Associates, Inc. (hereinafter referred to as “Leading Edge”) provides its clients with expertise and knowledge in advanced technologies and solutions to increase efficiency, productivity and effectiveness. Leading Edge is experienced in all aspects of disease vector control, agriculture, and forestry. The objective of Leading Edge’s mosquito control operations is the protection of public health from disease vectors (i.e., small organisms such as mosquitoes or ticks that can carry pathogens from person to person and place to place) and insuring a quality of life from nuisance mosquitoes.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Unmanned Aircraft System: PrecisionVision 10 UAS**

Leading Edge seeks an exemption to operate the Leading Edge PrecisionVision 10 UAS for compensation or hire within the NAS. The PrecisionVision 10 UAS is comprised of a vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) Unmanned Aircraft (UA) and a transportable Ground Control Station (GCS). The PrecisionVision 10 UA has a maximum gross weight of approximately 27 pounds, while having a length of 57 inches, width of 14 inches, height of 20 inches, and maximum speed of approximately 19 knots. The PrecisionVision 10 UA is equipped

with one main rotor and one tail rotor, driven by a Lithium Polymer battery powered electric motor.

The PrecisionVision 10 UA that will be operated by Leading Edge will be registered in accordance with 49 U.S.C. 44103, *Registration of Aircraft*, as well as 14 C.F.R Part 47, *Aircraft Registration*, and marked in accordance with 14 C.F.R. Part 45, *Identification and Registration Marking*.

### **BASIS FOR PETITION**

Petitioner, Leading Edge Associates, Inc., by and through undersigned counsel, pursuant to the provisions of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 C.F.R. § 11.61) and the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 (FMRA), Section 333, *Special Rules for Certain Unmanned Aircraft Systems*, hereby petitions the Administrator to commercially operate the PrecisionVision 10 UAS in the National Airspace System (NAS), and for an exemption from the requirements of 14 C.F.R §§ 61.113(a) & (b), 91.7(a), 91.121, 91.151(b), 91.405(a), 91.407(a)(1), 91.409(a)(1) & (a)(2), and 91.417(a) & (b).

In consideration of the size, weight, speed, and limited operating area associated with the unmanned aircraft and its operation, Leading Edge's operation of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS meets the conditions of FMRA Section 333 and therefore, will not require an airworthiness certificate in accordance with 14 C.F.R. Part 21, Subpart H.

Accordingly, Leading Edge requests relief from Sections 91.405(a), 91.407(a)(1), 91.409(a)(1) & (a)(2), and 91.417(a) & (b), as these sections set forth requirements for maintenance that only apply to aircraft with an airworthiness certificate.

Leading Edge submits that the requested relief is proper since an equivalent level of safety will be ensured. Leading Edge will use trained technicians to perform maintenance,

alterations, or preventive maintenance on the UAS using the methods, techniques, and practices prescribed in the operating documents (i.e., the PrecisionVision 10 UAS Operation Manual, Maintenance Schedule and Manual, Airframe Maintenance Manual, and Spektrum DX8 Instruction Manual). Furthermore, Leading Edge will document and maintain all maintenance records for the PrecisionVision 10 UAS.

Relief from certain requirements of Section 61.113(a) and (b), entitled *Private pilot privileges and limitations: Pilot in command*, is requested by Leading Edge to the extent necessary to allow a Pilot in Command (PIC) holding a private pilot or higher level certificate, as well as an airman medical certificate, and who has demonstrated, by meeting minimum flight-hour and currency requirements, that the PIC is able to safely operate the PrecisionVision 10 UAS in a manner consistent with this exemption, including evasive and emergency maneuvers and maintaining appropriate distances from people, vessels, vehicles and structures.

Leading Edge seeks relief from Section 91.7(a), entitled *Civil aircraft airworthiness*, because the PrecisionVision 10 UAS does not require an airworthiness certificate in accordance with 14 C.F.R. Part 21, Subpart H. As such, Leading Edge submits that it will ensure that the PrecisionVision 10 UAS is in an airworthy condition, prior to every flight, by determining that the UAS is in compliance with the operating documents (i.e., the PrecisionVision 10 UAS Operation Manual, Maintenance Schedule and Manual, Airframe Maintenance Manual, and Spektrum DX8 Instruction Manual), and that the aircraft is in a condition for safe flight.

Leading Edge also seeks an exemption from the requirements of Section 91.121, entitled *Altimeter Settings*, as the PrecisionVision 10 UA will not have a typical barometric altimeter onboard. However, altitude information of the PrecisionVision 10 UA will be provided to the PIC via Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment and a radio communications telemetry data

link, which downlinks from the UA to the GCS for active monitoring of the flight path. This altitude information, combined with Leading Edge's operation of the PrecisionVision 10 UA within visual line of sight, at or below 400 feet AGL, will ensure a level of safety equivalent to Section 91.121.

Additionally, Leading Edge seeks an exemption from the requirements of Section 91.151(b), entitled *Fuel requirements for flight in VFR conditions*. Leading Edge submits that safety will not be affected by operation of the PrecisionVision 10 UA during daylight hours in visual meteorological conditions (VMC) under visual flight rules (VFR), with enough battery power to fly for a total duration of 13.5 minutes to the first point of intended landing and, assuming normal cruising speed, to fly after that for at least 4.5 minutes (i.e., 25 percent battery power remaining).

In accordance with 14 C.F.R. § 11.81, Leading Edge provides the following information in support of its petition for exemption:

**A. Name And Address Of The Petitioner.**

The name and address of the Petitioner is:

Leading Edge Associates, Inc.  
702 Tulip Tree Court  
Fletcher, North Carolina 28732

The point of contact for this Petition and specific contact information is as follows:

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**B. The Specific Sections Of 14 C.F.R. From Which Leading Edge Seeks Exemption.**

**1. Leading Edge Seeks Exemption From The Requirements Of Section 61.113(a) And (b).**

Section 61.113, entitled *Private pilot privileges and limitations: Pilot in command*, subsections (a) and (b) prescribe the following, in relevant part:

(a) No person who holds a private pilot certificate may act as a pilot in command (PIC) of an aircraft that is carrying passengers or property for compensation or hire; nor may that person, for compensation or hire, act as PIC of an aircraft.

(b) A private pilot may, for compensation or hire, act as PIC of an aircraft in connection with any business or employment if—

(1) The flight is only incidental to that business or employment; and

(2) The aircraft does not carry passengers or property for compensation or hire.

**2. Leading Edge Seeks Exemption From The Requirements Of Section 91.7(a).**

Section 91.7, entitled *Civil aircraft airworthiness*, subsection (a), states the following:

(a) No person may operate a civil aircraft unless it is in an airworthy condition.

**3. Leading Edge Seeks Exemption From The Requirements Of Section 91.121.**

Section 91.121, entitled *Altimeter settings*, subsection (a), states the following, in part:

(a) Each person operating an aircraft shall maintain the cruising altitude or flight level of that aircraft, as the case may be, by reference to an altimeter that is set, when operating--

(1) Below 18,000 feet MSL, to--

(i) The current reported altimeter setting of a station along the route and within 100 nautical miles of the aircraft;

(ii) If there is no station within the area prescribed in paragraph (a)(1)(i) of this section, the current reported altimeter setting of an appropriate available station; or

(iii) In the case of an aircraft not equipped with a radio, the elevation of the departure airport or an appropriate altimeter setting available before departure.



**4. Leading Edge Seeks Exemption From The Requirements Of Section 91.151(b).**

Section 91.151, entitled *Fuel requirements for flight in VFR conditions*, subsection (b), states the following:

(b) No person may begin a flight in a rotorcraft under VFR conditions unless (considering wind and forecast weather conditions) there is enough fuel to fly to the first point of intended landing and, assuming normal cruising speed, to fly after that for at least 20 minutes.

**5. Leading Edge Seeks Exemption From The Requirement Of Section 91.405(a).**

Section 91.405, entitled *Maintenance required*, subsection (a), states the following:

Each owner or operator of an aircraft—

(a) Shall have that aircraft inspected as prescribed in subpart E of this part and shall between required inspections, except as provided in paragraph (c) of this section, have discrepancies repaired as prescribed in part 43 of this chapter[.]

**6. Leading Edge Seeks Exemption From The Requirements Of Section 91.407(a)(1).**

Section 91.407, entitled *Operation after maintenance, preventive maintenance, rebuilding, or alteration*, subsection (a)(1), states the following:

(a) No person may operate any aircraft that has undergone maintenance, preventive maintenance, rebuilding, or alteration unless--

(1) It has been approved for return to service by a person authorized under § 43.7 of this chapter[.]

**7. Leading Edge Seeks Exemption From The Requirements Of Sections 91.409(a)(1) And 91.409(a)(2).**

Section 91.409, entitled *Inspections*, subsection (a), states the following:

(a) Except as provided in paragraph (c) of this section, no person may operate an aircraft unless, within the preceding 12 calendar months, it has had --

(1) An annual inspection in accordance with part 43 of this chapter and has been approved for return to service by a person authorized by § 43.7 of this chapter; or

(2) An inspection for the issuance of an airworthiness certificate in accordance with part 21 of this chapter.

**8. Leading Edge Seeks Exemption From The Requirements Of Sections 91.417(a) And 91.417(b).**

Section 91.417, entitled *Maintenance records*, subsections (a) and (b), state the following:

(a) Except for work performed in accordance with §§ 91.411 and 91.413, each registered owner or operator shall keep the following records for the periods specified in paragraph (b) of this section:

(1) Records of the maintenance, preventive maintenance, and alteration and records of the 100-hour, annual, progressive, and other required or approved inspections, as appropriate, for each aircraft (including the airframe) and each engine, propeller, rotor, and appliance of an aircraft. The records must include--

(i) A description (or reference to data acceptable to the Administrator) of the work performed; and

(ii) The date of completion of the work performed; and

(iii) The signature, and certificate number of the person approving the aircraft for return to service.

(2) Records containing the following information:

(i) The total time in service of the airframe, each engine, each propeller, and each rotor.

(ii) The current status of life-limited parts of each airframe, engine, propeller, rotor, and appliance.

(iii) The time since last overhaul of all items installed on the aircraft which are required to be overhauled on a specified time basis.

(iv) The current inspection status of the aircraft, including the time since the last inspection required by the inspection program under which the aircraft and its appliances are maintained.

(v) The current status of applicable airworthiness directives (AD) and safety directives including, for each, the method of compliance, the AD or safety

directive number and revision date. If the AD or safety directive involves recurring action, the time and date when the next action is required.

(vi) Copies of the forms prescribed by § 43.9(d) of this chapter for each major alteration to the airframe and currently installed engines, rotors, propellers, and appliances.

(b) The owner or operator shall retain the following records for the periods prescribed:

(1) The records specified in paragraph (a)(1) of this section shall be retained until the work is repeated or superseded by other work or for 1 year after the work is performed.

(2) The records specified in paragraph (a)(2) of this section shall be retained and transferred with the aircraft at the time the aircraft is sold.

(3) A list of defects furnished to a registered owner or operator under § 43.11 of this chapter shall be retained until the defects are repaired and the aircraft is approved for return to service.

**C. The Extent Of Relief Leading Edge Seeks And The Reason Leading Edge Seeks The Relief.**

**1. Extent Of Relief Leading Edge Seeks And The Reason Leading Edge Seeks Relief From Section 61.113(a) And (b).**

Relief from Section 61.113(a) and (b) entitled *Private pilot privileges and limitations*:

*Pilot in command*, is requested to the extent necessary to allow a PIC holding a private pilot or higher level certificate, as well as a current and valid airman medical certificate, and who has met certain flight-hour and currency requirements, to conduct the proposed UAS flight operations for compensation or hire.

This relief is requested since the limitations set forth in Section 61.113(a) and (b) state that a private pilot may, for compensation or hire, act as PIC of an aircraft in connection with any business or employment if: (1) The flight is only incidental to that business or employment; and (2) The aircraft does not carry passengers or property for compensation or hire.

As set forth more fully below, Leading Edge submits that an equivalent level of safety will be maintained because no PIC will be allowed to operate the PrecisionVision 10 UAS unless that PIC has met certain flight-hour and currency requirements, demonstrating that the PIC is able to safely operate the PrecisionVision 10 UAS in a manner consistent with the operations specifications as described in this exemption, including evasive and emergency maneuvers, as well as maintaining appropriate distances from people, vessels, vehicles and structures.

Further, Leading Edge submits that all flights of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS, conducted by the PIC pursuant to the grant of this Petition: (1) will be incidental to Leading Edge's business; and (2) will not carry passengers or property for compensation or hire.

**2. Extent Of Relief Leading Edge Seeks And The Reason Leading Edge Seeks Relief From Section 91.7(a).**

Relief from Section 91.7(a) entitled *Civil aircraft airworthiness*, is requested to the extent required to allow Leading Edge to determine that the PrecisionVision 10 UAS is in an airworthy condition prior to every flight by ensuring that the UAS is in compliance with the operating documents (i.e., the PrecisionVision 10 UAS Operation Manual, Maintenance Schedule and Manual, Airframe Maintenance Manual, and Spektrum DX8 Instruction Manual).

Leading Edge seeks the requested relief because the PrecisionVision 10 UAS does not require an airworthiness certificate in accordance with 14 C.F.R. Part 21, Subpart H. Therefore, Leading Edge will ensure that the PrecisionVision 10 UAS is in an airworthy condition based upon its compliance with the operating documents (i.e., the PrecisionVision 10 UAS Operation Manual, Maintenance Schedule and Manual, Airframe Maintenance Manual, and Spektrum DX8 Instruction Manual) prior to every flight, and further, determine that the aircraft is in a condition for safe flight, as stated in the conditions and limitations below.

**3. Extent Of Relief Leading Edge Seeks And The Reason Leading Edge Seeks Relief From Section 91.121.**

Relief from Section 91.121, entitled *Altimeter settings*, may be required to allow flight operations of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS, which utilizes a barometric pressure sensor, GPS equipment, and a radio communications telemetry data link to downlink altitude information from the UA to the PIC at the ground control station (GCS). Since the FAA requires that any altitude information concerning UAS operations be reported to air traffic control (ATC) in feet above ground level (AGL), Leading Edge seeks the requested relief because the PrecisionVision 10 UA's altimeter may be set on the ground to zero feet AGL, rather than the local barometric pressure or field altitude, before each flight.

Considering the limited altitude of the proposed operations, relief from 14 CFR 91.121 is sought to the extent necessary to comply with the applicable conditions and limitations stated below. As more fully set forth herein, an equivalent level of safety will be maintained since the PrecisionVision 10 UA is equipped with a barometric pressure sensor and GPS equipment, which automatically ensures that a ground level pressure setting will be established prior to each flight, and provides the PIC with altitude information of the UA on the heads-up display of the GCS.

**4. Extent Of Relief Leading Edge Seeks And The Reason Leading Edge Seeks Relief From Section 91.151(b).**

Relief from Section 91.151(b) entitled *Fuel requirements for flight in VFR conditions*, is requested to the extent required to allow flights of the battery powered PrecisionVision 10 UA during daylight hours in visual meteorological conditions (VMC), under visual flight rules (VFR), for a total duration of 13.5 minutes to the first point of intended landing and, assuming normal cruising speed, to fly after that for at least 4.5 minutes (i.e., 25 percent battery power

remaining). Leading Edge seeks the requested relief because without an exemption from Section 91.151(b), the flight time duration of the battery powered PrecisionVision 10 UA will severely constrain the practicality of any aerial acquisition and research flight operations that Leading Edge proposes to conduct pursuant to this Petition.

Significantly, as set forth below, the technical specifications of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS, the PrecisionVision 10 operating documents, and Leading Edge's proposed operating limitations, ensure that Leading Edge will safely operate the battery powered PrecisionVision 10 UA during daylight hours in visual meteorological conditions (VMC), under visual flight rules (VFR), with enough battery power to fly for a total duration of 13.5 minutes to the first point of intended landing and, assuming normal cruising speed, to fly after that for at least 4.5 minutes (i.e., 25 percent battery power remaining).

**5. Extent Of Relief Leading Edge Seeks And The Reason Leading Edge Seeks Relief From Sections 91.405(a), 91.407(a)(1), 91.409(a)(1) & (a)(2), And 91.417(a) & (b).**

Since Sections 91.405(a), 91.407(a)(1), 91.409(a)(1) & (a)(2), and 91.417(a) & (b) only apply to aircraft with an airworthiness certificate, Leading Edge requests relief from these Sections because the PrecisionVision 10 UAS does not require an airworthiness certificate. As set forth more fully below, the PrecisionVision 10 UAS meets the conditions of FMRA Section 333 for operation without an airworthiness certificate. Accordingly, Leading Edge will use trained technicians to perform maintenance, alterations, or preventive maintenance on the UAS using the methods, techniques, and practices prescribed in the UAS operating documents (i.e., the PrecisionVision 10 UAS Operation Manual, Maintenance Schedule and Manual, Airframe Maintenance Manual, and Spektrum DX8 Instruction Manual). Furthermore, Leading Edge will document and maintain all maintenance records for the PrecisionVision 10 UAS.

**D. The Reasons Why Granting Leading Edge's Request Would Be In The Public Interest; That Is, How It Would Benefit The Public As A Whole.**

Granting the present Petition will further the public interest by allowing Leading Edge to safely, efficiently, and economically perform aerial acquisitions, aerial application, and research over rural areas of the United States, commercially, in support of government entities, agriculture, and scientific studies. Specifically, Leading Edge will operate the PrecisionVision 10 UAS as part of an integrated mosquito management program, which will serve to protect public health and reduce vector borne disease transmission.

Additionally, use of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS will decrease congestion of the NAS, reduce pollution, and provide significant benefits to the economy. Notably, the benefits of Leading Edge's proposed operation of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS will be realized without implicating any privacy issues.

**1. The Public Will Benefit From The Aerial Acquisition And Research Performed.**

Leading Edge submits this Petition to commercially operate the PrecisionVision 10 UAS and perform aerial acquisition, aerial application, and research throughout rural areas of the United States, as part of mosquito control operations including pest/vector management programs, source analysis and reduction strategies, breeding habitat surveillance, and the creation of predictive mosquito breeding models. Therefore, the operations that Leading Edge will perform with the PrecisionVision 10 UAS will directly benefit the public and promote public health by enhancing current mosquito suppression efforts, and help prevent the spread of disease through nuisance mosquito species.

The mission statement and objective of Leading Edge's mosquito control operation is the protection of public health from disease vectors (i.e., small organisms such as mosquitoes or

ticks that can carry pathogens from person to person and place to place), as well as insuring a quality of life free from nuisance mosquitoes.

Leading Edge's use of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS, accompanied with imagery sensors for creating geo-reference mosaic imagery, 3D elevation profiles and other models, will greatly enhance the efficiency and precision of mosquito control operations.

Specifically, Leading Edge's use of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS will increase the precision and efficiency of strategies that are vital to integrated pest/vector management programs, such as source reduction, source analysis, and breeding habitat surveillance. Moreover, an increase in the precision and efficiency of these strategies will result in a decreased use of costly larvacides and insecticides.

The public will also benefit through Leading Edge's use of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS, since Mosquito breeding habitats are often located in areas that are inaccessible by manned vehicles, and/or are located in areas where the use of manned vehicles will negatively impact the environment. While operating in areas such as fresh and salt water marshes, pasture lands, and wetlands, the use of a battery operated, lightweight UAS will eliminate the harmful effects that manned vehicles or aircraft may have on threatened and endangered species, such as fuel pollution, noise pollution, and bird strikes.

Additionally, use of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS increases the ability to respond effectively and efficiently during natural disasters, since response strategies that rely upon use of the UAS are not practical with the use of manned aircraft.

## **2. The Public Will Benefit From Decreased Congestion Of The NAS.**

The PrecisionVision 10 UA is battery powered and serves as a safe, efficient, and economical alternative to the manned aircraft traditionally utilized to obtain aerial imagery. By



reducing the amount of manned aircraft needed to perform aerial acquisitions, an exemption allowing the use of a PrecisionVision 10 UAS would reduce the amount of manned aircraft in the NAS, reduce noise and air pollution, as well as increase the safety of life and property in the air and on the ground.

Furthermore, by reducing the number of manned aircraft operating in the NAS, congestion around airports caused by arriving and departing aircraft will be reduced. The PrecisionVision 10 UA does not require an airport to takeoff or land. Likewise, a reduction of manned aircraft conducting aerial survey missions would result in fewer aircraft that must be handled by air traffic control during the ground, takeoff, departure, arrival, and landing phases of flight operations.

### **3. The Public Will Benefit From The Safety And Efficiency Of The PrecisionVision 10 UAS.**

Conducting aerial acquisitions with the PrecisionVision 10 UAS, instead of manned aircraft, will greatly benefit the public by drastically reducing the levels of air and noise pollution generated during traditional aerial survey flight operations. By using battery power and electric motors, the PrecisionVision 10 UAS produces no air pollution, and is the most viable environmentally conscious alternative to the cabin class, six cylinder internal combustion twin engine aircraft that are typically utilized for aerial acquisitions, while burning approximately 20-30 gallons per hour of leaded aviation fuel. The PrecisionVision 10 UA, while reducing the carbon footprint of aerial acquisitions, also eliminates noise pollution, as the UA is propelled by battery powered electric motors, rather than an internal combustion engine.

By using the PrecisionVision 10 UAS to perform aerial acquisitions, the substantial risk to life and property in the air and on the ground, which is usually associated with traditional manned aircraft flight operations, will be substantially reduced or completely eliminated. Aside

from the lack of flightcrew members located onboard the aircraft, the PrecisionVision 10 UA (weighing approximately 27 pounds at its maximum gross weight with a length of 57 inches, width of 14 inches, and with no fuel on board), has less physical potential for collateral damage to life and property on the ground, and in the air, compared to the manned aircraft that typically conduct aerial acquisitions (weighing approximately 6,500 pounds with a wingspan of approximately 40 feet, a length of 34 feet, and a fuel capacity of 180 gallons).

#### **4. Performing Aerial Acquisition Operations With The PrecisionVision 10 UAS Will Benefit The Economy.**

In addition to being safe and efficient, the PrecisionVision 10 UAS is also an economical alternative to using manned aircraft to conduct aerial acquisitions. As such, operation of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS will allow United States based companies, like Leading Edge, to remain competitive and contribute to growth of the U.S. economy. Specifically, with the rising cost of aviation fuel and the Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) regulatory actions phasing out leaded aviation fuels, U.S. owned and operated companies must adopt new and alternative technology in order to remain competitive. Operating the battery powered PrecisionVision 10 UAS is one such technology that not only allows companies greater operational flexibility compared to manned aircraft, but provides such flexibility without the high operational cost of a traditional manned aircraft.

By operating the PrecisionVision 10 UAS, companies such as Leading Edge, can remain competitive and profitable, and therefore, provide greater job stability to employees and contractors, which will ultimately contribute to growth of the U.S. economy. Improved financial performance of U.S. companies, through commercial use of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS, provides a stable workforce that increases consumer spending; improves local, state, and federal

tax revenues; and allows companies to invest in research and development in order to remain competitive both in the United States and abroad.

**5. There Are No Privacy Issues.**

Similar to the manned aerial acquisition flight operations that have been conducted for decades, Leading Edge's proposed operation of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS will not implicate any privacy issues. Specifically, the PrecisionVision 10 UAS will be operated only in rural areas, and in accordance with the Federal Aviation Regulations, including the minimum altitude requirements of 14 C.F.R. § 91.119. Most significantly, the PrecisionVision 10 UA will not be operated closer than 500 feet to any person, vessel, vehicle, or structure, which is not directly involved in the operation.

**E. The Reasons Why Granting The Exemption Would Not Adversely Affect Safety, Or How The Exemption Would Provide A Level Of Safety At Least Equal To That Provided By The Rule From Which Leading Edge Seeks Exemption.**

**1. Reasons Why The PrecisionVision 10 UAS Meets The Conditions Of The FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 (FMRA) Section 333.**

In consideration of the size, weight, speed, and limited operating area associated with the unmanned aircraft and its operation, Leading Edge's operation of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS meets the conditions of FMRA Section 333, and will not require an airworthiness certificate in accordance with 14 C.F.R. Part 21, Subpart H.

Section 333 provides authority for a UAS to operate without airworthiness certification and sets forth requirements for considering whether a UAS will create a hazard to users of the NAS or the public, or otherwise pose a threat to national security. Specifically, FMRA Section 333 states the following, in part:

*(a) In General.--Notwithstanding any other requirement of this subtitle, and not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Transportation shall determine if certain unmanned aircraft systems may operate safely in the national*

*airspace system before completion of the plan and rulemaking required by section 332 of this Act or the guidance required by section 334 of this Act.*

*(b) Assessment of Unmanned Aircraft Systems.--In making the determination under subsection (a), the Secretary shall determine, at a minimum--*

*(1) which types of unmanned aircraft systems, if any, as a result of their size, weight, speed, operational capability, proximity to airports and populated areas, and operation within visual line of sight do not create a hazard to users of the national airspace system or the public or pose a threat to national security; and*

*(2) whether a certificate of waiver, certificate of authorization, or airworthiness certification under section 44704 of title 49, United States Code, is required for the operation of unmanned aircraft systems identified under paragraph (1).*

*(c) Requirements for Safe Operation.--If the Secretary determines under this section that certain unmanned aircraft systems may operate safely in the national airspace system, the Secretary shall establish requirements for the safe operation of such aircraft systems in the national airspace system.*

In seeking this exemption, Leading Edge submits that the PrecisionVision 10 UAS can operate safely in the NAS pursuant to FMRA Section 333, as demonstrated by: (a) the characteristics of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS; (b) the pilot certification requirement; and (c) the specific operating limitations.

**a. The Specifications Of The PrecisionVision 10 UAS Demonstrate Its Safe Characteristics.**

The PrecisionVision 10 UAS does not create a hazard to users of the NAS or the public, or otherwise pose a threat to national security considering its size, weight, speed, and operational capability.

**i. Technical Specifications Of The PrecisionVision 10 UAS.**

The technical specifications of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS are set forth by the PrecisionVision 10 Specifications and Data Sheet, attached hereto as Exhibit A. Exhibit A

contains proprietary information and is to be held in a separate file pursuant to 14 C.F.R. § 11.35(b)<sup>1</sup>.

**ii. The PrecisionVision 10 UAS Autonomous Flight And Navigation Modes Enable The UAS To Remain Within A Defined Operational Area.**

The PrecisionVision 10 UAS may be operated in both manual and fully autonomous flight modes. A complete description of the flight and navigational modes of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS is provided at pages 3-9 of the PrecisionVision 10 User Manual, attached hereto as Exhibit B. Exhibit B contains proprietary information and is to be held in a separate file pursuant to 14 C.F.R. § 11.35(b).

**iii. The PrecisionVision 10 UAS Is Designed For Automatic Return To Home Point Or Hover In The Event Of Loss Of The Control Link Or Navigation.**

When the Control Link is lost, the PrecisionVision 10 UA will remain stationary, in flight, for 30 seconds. If, after 30 seconds, the PrecisionVision 10 UA does not reacquire control link data from the GCS, the UA will assume that the Control Link is lost and the UA will return to the home position (i.e., failsafe mode) via GPS, and will descend to the takeoff position and shutdown.

When GPS signal is lost, the PrecisionVision 10 UA will continue to estimate its position and velocity based upon accelerometers. In the case of GPS signal loss, the UA autopilot will rely upon recorded pitch and roll values in order to keep the UA in a stable flight mode. In the alternative, the UA autopilot has the ability to allow the operator to control the desired pitch and roll in the unlikely event of GPS signal loss. If the operator cannot take control of the helicopter

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<sup>1</sup> Exhibits to this Petition contain proprietary information, and in accordance with 14 C.F.R. § 11.35(b), are not to be included in the Federal Docket Management System (FDMS).

using the remote transmitter or CGS, the UA autopilot will keep the UA stable until GPS signal is reacquired.

A complete description of the Failsafe Functions of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS are set forth at pages 7 through 9 (i.e., GPS Loss- Recovery Method) and pages 12 through 13 (i.e., Fly-Away Prevention Measures) of the PrecisionVision 10 User Manual, attached hereto as Exhibit B. Exhibit B contains proprietary information and is to be held in a separate file pursuant to 14 C.F.R. § 11.35(b).

**iv. The PrecisionVision 10 GCS And Its Operation.**

A complete description of the operation and specifications of the PrecisionVision 10 GCS and flight control software is provided at pages 9 through 20 of the PrecisionVision 10 User Manual. A complete description of the manual control transmitter is set forth in the Spektrum DX8 Instruction Manual. A copy of the PrecisionVision 10 User Manual is attached hereto as Exhibit B, and a copy of the Spektrum DX8 Instruction Manual is attached hereto as Exhibit C. These exhibits are to be held in a separate file pursuant to 14 C.F.R. § 11.35(b).

**b. Flight Operations Of The PrecisionVision 10 UAS Are Limited To The Line Of Sight Of A Certificated Pilot in Command With A Safety Observer.**

Leading Edge will only utilize certificated pilots who possess a current and valid airman medical certificate to act as a pilot in command (PIC) of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS. Additionally, a safety observer will assist all pilots during flight time.

**c. Flights Of The PrecisionVision 10 UAS Will Be Conducted Pursuant To Specific Operating Limitations.**

In seeking this exemption, Leading Edge proposes to commercially operate the PrecisionVision 10 UAS for the special purpose of conducting aerial acquisitions over rural areas of United States, pursuant to the following specific operating limitations:

1. Operations authorized by this grant of exemption will be limited to the following aircraft described in the operating documents, a rotorcraft UAS weighing less than 27 pounds maximum gross weight: PrecisionVision 10 Unmanned Aircraft System. Proposed operations of any other aircraft will require a new petition or a petition to amend this grant.
2. UAS operations under this exemption will be limited to conducting operations for the purpose of aerial acquisitions.
3. The UA may not be flown at an indicated airspeed exceeding 19 knots.
4. The UA must be operated at an altitude of no more than 400 feet above ground level (AGL), as indicated by the procedures specified in the operating documents. All altitudes reported to ATC must be in feet AGL.
5. The UA must be operated within visual line of sight (VLOS) of the PIC at all times. This requires the PIC to be able to use human vision unaided by any device other than corrective lenses, as specified on the PIC's FAA-issued airman medical certificate.
6. The use of first person view (FPV) by the PIC or visual observer (VO) is not permitted.
7. All operations must utilize a visual observer (VO). The VO may be used to satisfy the VLOS requirement as long as the PIC always maintains VLOS capability. The VO and PIC must be able to communicate verbally at all times. Electronic messaging or texting is not permitted during flight operations. The PIC must be designated before the flight and cannot transfer his or her designation for the duration of the flight. The PIC must ensure that the VO can perform the functions prescribed in the operating documents.
8. The VO must not perform any other duties beyond assisting the PIC with seeing and avoiding other air traffic and other ground based obstacles/obstructions and is not permitted to operate the camera or other instruments.
9. The operating documents and the grant of exemption must be accessible during UAS operations and made available to the Administrator upon request. If a discrepancy exists between the conditions and limitations contained in the grant of exemption and the procedures outlined in the operating documents, the conditions and limitations contained in the grant of exemption take precedence and must be followed. Otherwise, the operator must follow the procedures as outlined in its operating documents. The operator may update or revise its operating documents. It is the operator's responsibility to track such revisions and present updated and revised documents to the Administrator upon request. The operator must also present updated and revised documents if it petitions for extension or amendment to the grant of exemption. If the operator determines that any update or revision would affect the basis upon which the FAA granted the exemption, then the operator must petition for amendment to its grant of exemption. The FAA's UAS

Integration Office (AFS-80) may be contacted if questions arise regarding updates or revisions to the operating documents.

10. Prior to each flight the PIC must inspect the UAS to ensure that it is in a condition for safe flight. If the inspection reveals a condition that affects the safe operation of the UAS, the aircraft is prohibited from operating until the necessary maintenance has been performed and the UAS is found to be in a condition for safe flight. The Ground Control Station must be included in the preflight inspection. All maintenance and alterations must be properly documented in the aircraft records.

11. Any UAS that has undergone maintenance or alterations that affect the UAS operation or flight characteristics, e.g. replacement of a flight critical component, must undergo a functional test flight. The PIC who conducts the functional test flight must make an entry in the aircraft records.

12. The pre-flight inspection must account for all potential discrepancies, e.g. inoperable components, items, or equipment, not already covered in the relevant sections of the operating documents.

13. The operator must follow the UAS manufacturer's aircraft/component, maintenance, overhaul, replacement, inspection, and life limit requirements.

14. The operator must carry out its maintenance, inspections, and record keeping requirements, in accordance with the operating documents. Maintenance, inspection, alterations, and status of replacement/overhaul component parts must be noted in the aircraft records, including total time in service, description of work accomplished, and the signature of the authorized person returning the UAS to service.

15. Each UAS operated under this exemption must comply with all manufacturer Safety Bulletins.

16. The authorized person must make an entry in the aircraft record of the corrective action taken against discrepancies discovered between inspections.

17. The PIC must possess at least a private pilot certificate and at least a current third-class medical certificate. The PIC must also meet the flight review requirements specified in 14 C.F.R. § 61.56 in an aircraft in which the PIC is rated on his or her pilot certificate.

18. The operator may not permit any PIC to operate unless the PIC meets the operator's qualification criteria and demonstrates the ability to safely operate the UAS in a manner consistent with how the UAS will be operated under the exemption, including evasive and emergency maneuvers and maintaining appropriate distances from persons, vessels, vehicles and structures. PIC qualification flight hours must be logged in a manner consistent with 14 C.F.R. § 61.51(b). The VO is also required to complete the operator's training requirements. A record of training must be documented and made available upon request by the Administrator. Flights for the purposes of training the operator's PICs and



VOs (training, proficiency, and experience-building) are permitted under the terms of the exemption. However, training operations may only be conducted during dedicated training sessions. During training, proficiency, and experience-building flights, all persons not essential for flight operations are considered nonparticipants, and the PIC must operate the UA with appropriate distance from nonparticipants in accordance with 14 C.F.R. § 91.119.

19. UAS operations may not be conducted during night, as defined in 14 C.F.R. § 1.1. All operations must be conducted under visual meteorological conditions (VMC). Flights under special visual flight rules (SVFR) are not authorized.

20. The UA may not operate within 5 nautical miles of an airport reference point as denoted on a current FAA-published aeronautical chart unless a letter of agreement with that airport's management is obtained, and the operation is conducted in accordance with a NOTAM as required by the operator's COA. The letter of agreement with the airport management must be made available to the Administrator upon request.

21. The UA may not be operated less than 500 feet below or less than 2,000 feet horizontally from a cloud or when visibility is less than 3 statute miles from the PIC.

22. If the UA loses communications or loses its GPS signal, it must return to a pre-determined location within the planned operating area and land or be recovered in accordance with the operating documents.

23. The PIC must abort the flight in the event of unpredicted obstacles or emergencies in accordance with the operating documents.

24. The PIC is prohibited from beginning a flight unless (considering wind and forecast weather conditions) there is enough power to fly at normal cruising speed to the intended landing point and land the UA with 25% battery power remaining.

25. The operator must obtain an Air Traffic Organization (ATO) issued Certificate of Waiver or Authorization (COA) prior to conducting any operations under the grant of exemption. This COA will also require the operator to request a Notice to Airman (NOTAM) not more than 72 hours in advance, but not less than 48 hours prior to the operation. All operations shall be conducted in accordance with airspace requirements in the ATO issued COA including class of airspace, altitude level and potential transponder requirements.

26. All aircraft operated in accordance with the exemption must be identified by serial number, registered in accordance with 14 C.F.R. part 47, and have identification (N-Number) markings in accordance with 14 C.F.R. part 45, Subpart C. Markings must be as large as practicable.

27. Before conducting operations, the radio frequency spectrum used for operation and control of the UA must comply with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) or other appropriate government oversight agency requirements.
28. The documents required fewer than 14 C.F.R. 91.9 and 91.203 must be available to the PIC at the Ground Control Station of the UAS any time the UAS is operating. These documents must be made available to the Administrator or any law enforcement official upon request.
29. The UA must remain clear and yield the right of way to all manned aviation operations and activities at all times.
30. The UAS may not be operated by the PIC from any moving device or vehicle.
31. The UA may not be operated over congested or densely populated areas.
32. Flight operations must be conducted at least 500 feet from all nonparticipating persons (persons other than the PIC, VO, operator trainees or essential persons), vessels, vehicles, and structures unless:
- a. Barriers or structures are present that sufficiently protect nonparticipating persons from the UA and/or debris in the event of an accident. The operator must ensure that nonparticipating persons remain under such protection. If a situation arises where nonparticipating persons leave such protection and are within 500 feet of the UA, flight operations must cease immediately and/or;
  - b. The aircraft is operated near vessels, vehicles or structures where the owner/controller of such vessels, vehicles or structures has granted permission and the PIC has made a safety assessment of the risk of operating closer to those objects and determined that it does not present an undue hazard, and;
  - c. Operations nearer to the PIC, VO, operator trainees or essential persons do not present an undue hazard to those persons per § 91.119(a).
33. All operations shall be conducted over private or controlled-access property with permission from the land owner/controller or authorized representative. Permission from land owner/controller or authorized representative will be obtained for each flight to be conducted.
34. Any incident, accident, or flight operation that transgresses the lateral or vertical boundaries of the operational area as defined by the applicable COA must be reported to the FAA's UAS Integration Office (AFS-80) within 24 hours. Accidents must be reported to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) per instructions contained on the NTSB Web site: [www.nts.gov](http://www.nts.gov).

**2. Reasons Why An Exemption From The Requirements Of Section 61.113(a) And (b) Would Not Adversely Affect Safety.**

Leading Edge submits that the equivalent level of safety established by Section 61.113(a) and (b) will be maintained because no PIC will be allowed to operate the PrecisionVision 10 UAS unless that PIC has demonstrated, by meeting minimum flight-hour and currency requirements, that the PIC is able to safely operate the PrecisionVision 10 UAS in a manner consistent with the exemption, including evasive and emergency maneuvers and maintaining appropriate distances from people, vessels, vehicles and structures.

Considering Leading Edge's proposed area of operations, and the operating limitations set forth-above; the parallel nature of private pilot aeronautical knowledge requirements to those of commercial pilot requirements (*See* Exemption No. 11062); and the airmanship skills necessary to safely operate the PrecisionVision 10 UAS, Leading Edge submits that the additional manned airmanship experience of a commercially certificated pilot would not correlate to the airmanship skills necessary for Leading Edge's specific proposed flight operations.

The FAA has previously granted relief from Section 61.113(a) and (b) specific to UAS, in circumstances similar, in all material respects, to those presented herein (e.g. Exemption Nos. 11062, 11063, 11064, 11065, 11066, 11067, 11080, 11109, 11110, 11112, 11136, 11138, 11150, 11153, 11156, 11158, 11159, 11160, 11161).

Leading Edge will not allow any PIC to operate the PrecisionVision 10 UAS unless that PIC has demonstrated, by meeting minimum flight-hour requirements or the PrecisionVision 10 UAS training and currency requirements, that the PIC is able to safely operate the PrecisionVision 10 UAS in a manner consistent with this exemption, including evasive and

emergency maneuvers and maintaining appropriate distances from people, vessels, vehicles and structures.

Specifically, the PIC must have accumulated and logged, in a manner consistent with 14 C.F.R. § 61.51(b), 25 hours of total time as a UAS rotorcraft pilot (with a minimum of 5 hours of those hours as a UAS pilot operating the same make and model of UAS to be used for operations under the exemption). In addition to the hour requirements, the PIC must accomplish 3 take-offs and landings in the preceding 90 days (for currency purposes).

As in Exemption Nos. 11062, 11138, and 11153, prior documented flight experience that was obtained in compliance with applicable regulations will ensure an equivalent level of safety during Leading Edge's proposed operations. The Administrator has held that prior documented flight experience that was obtained in compliance with applicable regulations would ensure safe operations, stating as follows:

In Exemption No. 11062, the FAA required that prior to conducting operations for the purpose of motion picture filming (or similar operations), the PIC must have accumulated and logged, in a manner consistent with 14 CFR 61.51(b), 25 hours of total time as a UAS rotorcraft pilot including at least 10 hours logged as a UAS pilot with a multi-rotor UAS. Prior to operations under Exemption No. 11062, the PIC must also have accumulated and logged a minimum of 5 hours as a UAS pilot operating the same make and model of UAS to be used for operations under the exemption. For clarification, the FAA considers these minimum hour requirements to be inclusive rather than additive; i.e. 5 hours make and model time may be included in the 10 hours of multi-rotor time and the 10 hours may be included in the total 25 hours of UAS rotorcraft time. In addition to the hour requirements, the PIC must accomplish 3 take-offs and landings in the preceding 90 days (for currency purposes). The FAA finds that at a minimum, the flight-hour requirements in Exemption No. 11062 are appropriate to practice and build proficiency in the skills necessary to safely conduct the petitioner's proposed operations. The FAA also finds that prior documented flight experience that was obtained in compliance with applicable regulations would satisfy this requirement. Training, proficiency, and experience-building flights can also be conducted under the grant of exemption to accomplish the required flight time. During training, proficiency, and experience-building flights the PIC is required to operate the UA with appropriate distances in accordance with 14 C.F.R 91.119.

Exemption No. 11138 at page 15.

Accordingly, Leading Edge will ensure safe operations by not allowing any PIC to operate the PrecisionVision 10 UAS unless that PIC has demonstrated, by meeting minimum flight-hour and currency requirements, that the PIC is able to safely operate the PrecisionVision 10 UAS in a manner consistent with the exemption, including evasive and emergency maneuvers and maintaining appropriate distances from people, vessels, vehicles and structures.

**3. Reasons Why An Exemption From The Requirements Of Section 91.7(a) Would Not Adversely Affect Safety.**

The equivalent level of safety established by Section 91.7(a) will be maintained because prior to every flight, Leading Edge will ensure that the PrecisionVision 10 UAS is in an airworthy condition based upon the UAS's compliance with its operating documents and as stated in the conditions and limitations herein.

Additionally, the FAA has previously granted relief from Section 91.7(a) specific to UAS, in circumstances similar, in all material respects, to those presented herein (e.g. Exemption Nos. 11062, 11063, 11064, 11065, 11066, 11067, 11080, 11109, 11110, 11112, 11136, 11138, 11150, 11153, 11156, 11157, 11158, 11159, 11160, 11161).

**4. Reasons Why An Exemption From The Requirements Of Section 91.121 Would Not Adversely Affect Safety.**

The equivalent level of safety established by Section 91.121 will be maintained because the altitude information of the PrecisionVision 10 UA will be provided to the PIC via GPS equipment and a radio communications telemetry data link, which downlinks from the UA to the GCS for active monitoring of the flight path and altitude. This altitude information, combined with Leading Edge's operation of the PrecisionVision 10 UA within visual line of sight, at or below 400 feet AGL, will ensure a level of safety equivalent to Section 91.121. The altitude

information will be generated by GPS equipment installed onboard the aircraft. Prior to each flight, a zero altitude initiation point is automatically established by the UAS at ground level.

The FAA has previously granted relief from Section 91.121 specific to UAS, in circumstances similar, in all material respects, to those presented herein (e.g. Exemption Nos. 11062, 11063, 11064, 11065, 11066, 11067, 11080, 11109, 11112, 11136, 11138, 11150, 11153, 11156, 11157, 11158, 11159, 11160, 11161).

**5. Reasons Why An Exemption From The Requirements Of Section 91.151(b) Would Not Adversely Affect Safety.**

A grant of this exemption would ensure an equivalent level of safety established by 14 C.F.R. Section 91.151(b) as a result of (1) the technical specifications of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS; (2) the limitations on the proposed flight operations; and (3) the location of the proposed flight operations. Accordingly, Leading Edge will ensure that it will safely operate the battery powered PrecisionVision 10 UA during daylight hours in VFR conditions, with enough battery power to fly for a total duration of 13.5 minutes to the first point of intended landing and, assuming normal cruising speed, to fly after that for at least 4.5 minutes (i.e., 25 percent battery power remaining).

Here, as in Exemption No. 11109, the technical specifications of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS; the limitations on the proposed flight operations; and the location of the proposed operations, will ensure an equivalent level of safety established by 14 C.F.R. Section 91.151(b). Furthermore, safety will be ensured as the PrecisionVision 10 UAS provides two audible and visual warnings to the PIC at the GCS when the UA experiences low battery voltage, the first warning occurring at 50% remaining battery power, and against at 30% remaining battery power.

Significantly, previous exemptions granted by the FAA concerning Section 91.151 establish that safety is not adversely affected when the technical characteristics and operating

limitations of the UAS are considered. Relief has been granted for manned aircraft to operate at less than the minimums prescribed in Section 91.151, including Exemption Nos. 2689, 5745, and 10650. Moreover, the FAA has previously granted relief from Section 91.151 specific to UAS, in circumstances similar, in all material respects, to those presented herein (e.g. Exemption Nos. 8811, 10808, 10673, 11042, 11062, 11063, 11064, 11065, 11066, 11067, 11080, 11109, 11110, 11136, 11138, 11150, 11153, 11156, 11157, 11158, 11159, 11160, 11161).

**6. Reasons Why An Exemption From The Requirements Of Sections 91.405(a), 91.407(a)(1), 91.409(a)(1) & (a)(2), And 91.417(a) & (b) Would Not Adversely Affect Safety.**

In seeking this exemption, Leading Edge submits that the equivalent level of safety with regard to the regulatory maintenance and alteration requirements established by Sections 91.405(a), 91.407(a)(1), 91.409(a)(1) & (a)(2), and 91.417(a) & (b) will be met because Leading Edge will use trained technicians to perform maintenance, alterations, or preventive maintenance on the UAS using the methods, techniques, and practices prescribed in the operating documents (i.e., the PrecisionVision 10 UAS Operation Manual, Maintenance Schedule and Manual, Airframe Maintenance Manual, and Spektrum DX8 Instruction Manual). Furthermore, Leading Edge will document and maintain all maintenance records for the PrecisionVision 10 UAS.

Since the PrecisionVision 10 UAS will be inspected as prescribed by the operating documents, Leading Edge will maintain the equivalent level of safety established by Sections 91.405(a), 91.409(a)(1), and 91.409(a)(2). A copy of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS User Manual is attached hereto as Exhibit B; a copy of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS Maintenance Schedule and Manual is attached hereto as Exhibit D; and a copy of the Airframe Maintenance Manual is attached hereto as Exhibit E. Exhibits B, D, and E contain proprietary information and are to be held in a separate file pursuant to 14 C.F.R. § 11.35(b).

Likewise, the exemption sought will not adversely affect safety because Leading Edge will use trained technicians to perform maintenance, alterations or preventive maintenance on the UAS using the methods, techniques, and practices prescribed by the operating documents.

Furthermore, the exemption sought would maintain an equivalent level of safety established by Sections 91.407, 91.417(a) and 91.417(b), because all maintenance of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS will be performed by trained technicians, which will document and maintain maintenance records for the PrecisionVision 10 UAS.

Significantly, previous exemptions granted by the FAA concerning Sections 91.405(a), 91.407(a)(1), 91.409(a)(1) & (a)(2), and 91.417(a) & (b) establish that safety is not adversely affected when the technical characteristics and operating limitations of the UAS are considered.

In consideration of Leading Edge's proposed operating limitations, the operating documents, and the technical aspects of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS, Leading Edge submits that safety will not be adversely affected by granting exemption from 14 C.F.R. Sections 91.405(a), 91.407(a)(1) and (a)(2), 91.409(a)(2), and 91.417(a) and (b). The FAA has previously granted relief specific to UAS in circumstances similar, in all material respects, to those presented herein (e.g. Exemption Nos. 11062, 11063, 11064, 11065, 11066, 11067, 11080, 11109, 11110, 11112, 11136, 11138, 11150, 11153, 11156, 11157, 11158, 11159, 11160, 11161).

## **7. The FAA May Prescribe Any Other Conditions For Safe Operation.**

In accordance with Section 333 of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 (FMRA) and 14 C.F.R. § 21.16 entitled *Special Conditions*, Leading Edge requests that the FAA prescribe special conditions for the intended operation of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS, which contain such safety standards that the Administrator finds necessary to establish a level of safety equivalent to that established by 14 C.F.R. Part 21, Subpart H, and 14 C.F.R §§ 61.113(a) & (b), 91.7 (a), 91.121, 91.151(b), 91.405(a), 91.407(a)(1), 91.409(a)(1) & (a)(2), and 91.417(a) & (b).



Such special conditions will permit safe operation of the UA for the limited purpose of conducting aerial acquisitions over certain rural areas of the United States for compensation or hire. FMRA Section 333 sets forth the requirements for considering whether a UAS will create a hazard to users of the NAS or the public, or otherwise pose a threat to national security; and further, provides the authority for such UAS to operate without airworthiness certification in accordance with any requirements that must be established for the safe operation of the UAS in the NAS.

Likewise, the Administrator may prescribe special conditions pursuant to 14 C.F.R. § 21.16, for operation of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS, since the airworthiness regulations of 14 C.F.R. Part 21 do not contain adequate or appropriate safety standards, due to the novel or unusual design features of the aircraft. Section 21.16, entitled *Special Conditions*, states the following:

If the FAA finds that the airworthiness regulations of this subchapter do not contain adequate or appropriate safety standards for an aircraft, aircraft engine, or propeller because of a novel or unusual design feature of the aircraft, aircraft engine or propeller, he prescribes special conditions and amendments thereto for the product. The special conditions are issued in accordance with Part 11 of this chapter and contain such safety standards for the aircraft, aircraft engine or propeller as the FAA finds necessary to establish a level of safety equivalent to that established in the regulations.

*See* 14 C.F.R. § 21.16.

Therefore, in accordance with FMRA Section 333 and 14 C.F.R. § 21.16, the FAA may prescribe special conditions for Leading Edge's intended operation of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS, which contain such safety standards that the Administrator finds necessary to establish a level of safety equivalent to that established by 14 C.F.R. Part 21, Subpart H, and 14 C.F.R. Sections 61.113(a) & (b), 91.7(a), 91.121, 91.151(b), 91.405(a), 91.407(a)(1), 91.409(a)(1) & (a)(2), and 91.417(a) & (b).

**F. A Summary That Can Be Published In The *Federal Register*, stating:  
The Rules From Which Leading Edge Seeks Exemption:**

*Leading Edge Associates, Inc. seeks exemption from the requirements of 14 C.F.R. Sections 61.113(a)&(b), 91.7(a), 91.121, 91.151(b), 91.405(a), 91.407(a)(1), 91.409(a)(1) & (a)(2), and 91.417(a) & (b).*

**A Brief Description Of The Nature Of The Exemption Leading Edge Seeks:**

*This exemption will permit Leading Edge Associates, Inc. to commercially operate an Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) for the purpose of conducting aerial acquisitions and research over certain rural areas of the United States.*

**G. Any Additional Information, Views, Or Arguments Available To Support Leading Edge's Request.**

This Petition is made pursuant to the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 (FMRA) Section 333, which directs the Secretary of Transportation to determine if certain UAS may operate safely in the NAS. As such, Leading Edge's request for exemption may be granted pursuant to the authority of FMRA Section 333 and 14 C.F.R. Part 11, as set forth above.

FMRA Section 333 sets forth the requirements for considering whether a UAS will create a hazard to users of the NAS or the public, or otherwise pose a threat to national security; and further, provides the authority for such UAS to operate without airworthiness certification.

As discussed in detail above, Leading Edge will operate the PrecisionVision 10 UAS safely in the NAS, without creating a hazard to users of the NAS, or the public, or otherwise pose a threat to national security.

**CONCLUSION**

As set forth herein, Leading Edge seeks an exemption pursuant to 14 C.F.R. § 11.61 and Section 333 of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 (FMRA), which will permit safe operation of the PrecisionVision 10 UAS commercially, without an airworthiness certificate, for the limited purpose of conducting aerial acquisitions over certain rural areas of the United States.

By granting this Petition, the FAA Administrator will be fulfilling the Congressional mandate of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012, while also advancing the interests of the public, by allowing Leading Edge to safely, efficiently, and economically operate the PrecisionVision 10 UAS commercially within the NAS.

**WHEREFORE**, in accordance with the Federal Aviation Regulations and the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012, Section 333, Leading Edge respectfully requests that the Administrator grant this Petition for an exemption from the requirements of 14 C.F.R Sections 61.113(a) & (b), 91.7(a), 91.121, 91.151(b), 91.405(a), 91.407(a)(1), 91.409(a)(1) & (a)(2), and 91.417(a) & (b), and permit Leading Edge to operate the PrecisionVision 10 UAS commercially for the purpose of conducting aerial acquisitions and research over certain rural areas of the United States.

Dated: February 5, 2015

Respectfully submitted,

**The Aviation Law Firm**

*/s/ Gregory S. Winton*

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