



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Aviation
Administration**

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

September 14, 2015

Exemption No. 12843
Regulatory Docket No. FAA-2015-2093

Mr. Gregory Heide
Big Sky UAV LLC
825 Great Northern Boulevard
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Mr. Heide:

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 April 28, 2015, you petitioned the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on behalf of Big Sky UAV LLC (hereinafter petitioner or operator) for an exemption. The petitioner requested to operate an unmanned aircraft system (UAS) to conduct aerial videography and photography.

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.

Airworthiness Certification

The UAS proposed by the petitioner is a DJI Inspire 1.

The petitioner requested relief from 14 CFR part 21, *Certification procedures for products and parts, Subpart H—Airworthiness Certificates*. 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 the requested 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 collection¹. 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, Big Sky UAV LLC is granted an exemption 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.

¹ 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.

Conditions and Limitations

In this grant of exemption, Big Sky UAV LLC 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 DJI Inspire 1 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.

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 September 30, 2017, unless sooner superseded or rescinded.

Sincerely,

/s/

John S. Duncan

Director, Flight Standards Service

Enclosures

FAA Exemption Rulemaking
Section 333
Of The FAA Reform Act and Part 11

Prepared by

Gregory Heide

April 28th, 2015

825 Great Northern Blvd. Suite 322
Helena, MT 59601
406-461-7460
greg@bigskyuav.com

Attention:
United States Secretary of Transportation
Mr. Anthony R. Foxx
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington DC 20590

Re: Exemption Request Section 333 of the FAA Reform Act and 14 CFR Part 11 of the Federal Aviation Regulations from 14 CFR 45.23(b); 14 CFR Part 21; 14 CFR 61.113 (a) & (b); 91.7 (a); 91.9 (b) (2); 91.103 (b); 91.109; 91.119; 91.121; 91.151 (a); 91.203 (a) & (b); 91.409 (a) (2); 91.417 (a) & (b)

Dear Mr. Secretary,

Pursuant to Section 333 of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 (the Reform Act) and 14 CFR Part 11, Big Sky UAV LLC., a Montana Limited Liability Corporation, consultant, and operator of Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems ("sUASs") equipped to conduct aerial photography and videography purposes, hereby applies for an exemption from the listed Federal Aviation Regulations ("FARs") to allow commercial operation of its sUASs, so long as such operations are conducted within and under the conditions outlined herein or as may be established by the FAA as required by Section 333.

As described more fully below, the requested exemption would permit the operation of small, unmanned and relatively inexpensive sUAS under controlled conditions in airspace that is 1) limited, 2) predetermined, and 3) controlled as to access. Approval of this exemption would thereby fulfill the Secretary of Transportation's responsibilities to "...establish requirements for the safe operation of such aircraft systems in the national airspace system." Section 333 (c) of the Reform Act.

Big Sky UAV, LLC requests to use the DJI Inspire 1 for aerial imaging. The FAA has previously issued Grants of Exemption in circumstances similar in nearly all material respects to those presented in this petition. In previous 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 with the specifications described by the petitioners, carrying no passengers or crew—rather than a manned aircraft of far greater proportions, carrying crew and flammable fuel—gave the FAA good cause to find that the UAS operations were in the public interest. Big Sky UAV, LLC feels that the reasons stated by the FAA for granting Exemption Nos. 11062, 11109, 11112, and 11213 would also reasonably apply to the situation presented by this petition. Additionally, we feel that considering the enhanced safety features provided by the DJI Inspire 1 (the "No-Fly Zone" feature in particular), as well as the cost effectiveness of small UAS aerial photography, a grant of exemption would be in the public interest.

The name and address of the applicant is: Big Sky UAV, LLC Attn: Gregory Heide Phone: 406-461-7460 Email: greg@bigskyuav.com Address: 825 Great Northern Blvd, Suite 322, Helena, MT, 59601.

Regulations from which the exemption is requested:

14 CFR Part 21
14 CFR 45.23 (b)
14 CFR 61.113 (a) & (b)
14 CFR 91.7 (a)
14 CFR 91.9 (b) (2)
14 CFR 91.103
14 CFR 91.109
14 CFR 91.119
14 CFR 91.121
14 CFR 91.151 (a)
14 CFR 91.203 (a) & (b)
14 CFR 91.405 (a)
14 CFR 407 (a) (1)
14 CFR 409 (a) (2)
14 CFR 417 (a) & (b)

This exemption application is expressly submitted to fulfill Congress' goal in passing Section 333 (a) through (c) of the Reform Act. This directs the Secretary of Transportation to consider whether certain unmanned aircraft systems may operate safely in the national airspace system (NAS) before completion of the rulemaking required under Section 332 of the Reform Act. In making this determination, the Secretary is required to determine which types of UASs do not create a hazard to users of the NAS or the public or pose a threat to national security in light of the following:

- The sUAS's size, weight, speed, and operational capability
- Operation of the UAS in close proximity to airports and populated areas; and
- Operation of the UAS within Visual Line of Sight (VLOS) of the Pilot and Observers.

Reform Act §333 (a). Lastly, if the Secretary determines that such vehicles "may operate safely in the national airspace system, the Secretary shall establish requirements for the safe operation of such aircraft in the national airspace system." Reform Act §333 (c). The Federal Aviation Act expressly grants the FAA the authority to issue exemptions. This statutory authority by its terms includes exempting civil aircraft, as the term is defined under §40101 of the Act; that includes sUASs, from the requirement that all civil aircraft must have a current airworthiness certificate. The Administrator may grant an exemption from a requirement of a regulation prescribed under subsection (a) or (b) of this section or any sections 44702-44716 of this title if the Administrator finds the exemption in the public interest. 49 U.S.C. §44704; 14 CFR §91.203 (a) (1).

Big Sky UAV, LLC's sUASs are small rotorcraft aircraft, weighing less than 60 oz including sensor payload. We operate our rotorcraft under normal conditions at a speed of no more than 17

knots, usually 0-5 knots. The rotorcraft have the capability to hover and move in the vertical and horizontal plane simultaneously. We will manually operate only in Visual Line of Sight and will operate only within the operating parameters as described in the Operating Manual attached as Attachment 1.

Adherence to the Operating Manual will insure that the sUASs will “not create a hazard to the national airspace system or the public.”

Given the small size and weight of the sUASs involved and the restricted sterile environment within which they will operate, Big Sky UAV falls squarely within that zone of safety (an equivalent level of safety) in which Congress envisioned that the FAA must, by exemption, allow commercial operations of UASs to commence immediately. Also due to the size of the sUASs and the areas in which the relevant sUAS will operate, approval of the application presents no national security issue. Given the clear direction in Section 333 of the Reform Act, the authority contained in the Federal Aviation Act, as amended, granting the requested exemptions is in the public interest for the following reasons: (1) the strong equivalent level of safety surrounding the proposed operations, and (2) the significant public benefits, including enhanced safety, reduction in environmental impact, including reduced emissions associated with allowing UASs for educational and marketing operations, (as opposed to full scale aircraft). Accordingly, Big Sky UAV respectfully requests that the FAA grant the requested exemption without delay.

AIRCRAFT AND EQUIVALENT LEVEL OF SAFETY Big Sky UAV, LLC proposes that the exemption requested herein apply to civil aircraft that have the characteristics and that operate with the limitations listed herein. These limitations provide for at least an equivalent or possibly higher level of safety to operations under the current regulatory structure because the proposed operations represent a safety enhancement to the already safe filming operations conducted with conventional aircraft. These limitations and condition to which Big Sky UAV, LLC agrees to be bound when conducting commercial operations under an FAA issued exemption include:

1. The sUASs will weigh less than 5 lbs.
2. Flights will be operated manually within visual line of sight (VLOS) of the Pilot and aircrew (Spotter / Observer).
3. Maximum total flight time for each operational flight will be 25 minutes. Flights will be terminated at 25% battery power reserve should that occur prior to the 25 minute limit.
4. Flights will be operated at an altitude of no more than 200 feet AGL, though most operations will be conducted within 50 feet of the ground
5. Minimum two (2) man crew for each sUAS operation will consist of the Pilot and Spotter / Observer. In most cases the third aircrew member will serve as the Safety Officer.
6. The sUAS Pilot will be an FAA licensed airman with at least a private pilot's certificate and third class medical. The Spotter (Observer) will hold at least a third class medical.
7. The sUAS Pilot will serve as Pilot in Command (PIC). If a pilot certificate holder, other than the sUAS Pilot, possesses the necessary PIC qualifications and is also present, that person may also be designated as PIC.
8. The sUAS will only operate within an area as defined in the Manual on pages 45-48. Additionally, the sUAS will only operate under 200ft AGL, and outside a 3 statute mile radius of any

airport. The sUAS will never enter any MOA or Restricted Airspace, nor shall it violate any TFR as outlined by the FAA.

9. A pre-flight briefing will be conducted in regard to the planned sUAS operation prior to each day's flying / recording activities. It will be mandatory that all personnel who will be performing duties as "flight crew" be present for this briefing.

10. The Operator will obtain the consent of all persons involved in the filming and ensure that only consenting persons will be allowed within 100 feet of the flight operation, and this radius may be reduced to 30 feet based upon an equivalent level of safety determination.

11. Pilot, and Spotter (Observer) will have been trained in operation of sUASs generally and received up-to-date information on the particular sUAS to be operated as required.

12. Spotter (Observer) and Pilot will at all times be able to communicate by voice or radio.

13. Written and/or oral permission from the relevant property holders will be obtained.

14. If the sUAS loses communications or loses its GPS signal, the sUAS will have capability to return to a predetermined location and land.

15. The sUAS will have the capability to abort a flight in case of unpredicted obstacles or emergencies.

14 CFR Part 21, Subpart H: Airworthiness Certificates 14 CFR §91.203 (a) (1)

Subpart H, entitled Airworthiness Certificates, establishes the procedural requirements for the issuance of airworthiness certificates as required by FAR §91.203 (a) (1). Given the size and limited operating area associated with the aircraft to be utilized by Big Sky UAV, LLC, an exemption from 14 CFR Part 21 Subpart H meets the requirements of an equivalent level of safety under 14 CFR Part 11 and Section 333 of the Reform Act. The Federal Aviation Act (49 U.S.C. §44701 (f)) and Section 333 of the Reform Act both authorize the FAA to exempt aircraft from the requirement capability, and proximity to airports and populated areas of the particular UAS. In all cases, an analysis of these criteria demonstrates that the UAS operated without an airworthiness certificate, in the restricted environment and under the conditions proposed will be at least as safe, or safer, than a conventional aircraft (fixed-wing or rotorcraft) operating with an airworthiness certificate without the restrictions and conditions proposed.

The sUAS to be operated hereunder weighs less than 5 lbs. fully loaded, carries neither a pilot nor passenger, carries no explosive materials or flammable liquid fuels, and operates exclusively within a limited radius area as set out in the pre flight briefing / VLOS operations. Unlike other civil aircraft, operations under this exemption will be tightly controlled and monitored by both the Operator, pursuant to safety requirements, and under the requirements and in compliance with local public safety requirements, to provide security for the area of operation as is now done with conventional aircraft. These safety enhancements, which already apply to civil aircraft operated in connection with video production, provide a greater degree of safety to the public and property owners than conventional operations conducted with airworthiness certificates issued under 14 C.F.R. Part 21, Subpart H. Lastly, application of these same criteria demonstrates that there is no credible threat to national security posed by the sUAS, due to its size, speed of operation, location of operation, lack of explosive materials or flammable liquid fuels, and inability to carry a substantial external load.

14 CFR §45.23 (b):

With regard to marking of the aircraft, this regulation requires:

When marks include only the Roman capital letter “N” and the registration number is displayed on limited, restricted or light-sport category aircraft or experimental or provisionally certificated aircraft, the operator must also display on that aircraft near each entrance to the cabin, cockpit, or pilot station, in letters not less than 2 inches nor more than 6 inches high, the words “limited,” “restricted,” “light-sport,” “experimental,” or “provisional,” as applicable.

Even though the sUASs will have no airworthiness certificate, an exemption may be needed as the sUASs will have no entrance to the cabin, cockpit or pilot station on which the word “Experimental” can be placed. Given the size of the sUAVs, two-inch lettering will be impossible. The word “Experimental” will be placed on the fuselage in compliance with 14 CFR §45.29 (f).

The equivalent level of safety will be provided by having the sUAV marked on its fuselage as required by 14 CFR §45.29 (f) where the Pilot, Spotter (Observer) and others working with the sUAV will see the identification of the UAS as “Experimental.” The FAA has issued the following exemptions to this regulation to Exemptions Nos. 10700, 8738, 10167 and 10167A.

14 CFR §61.113 (a) & (b): Private Pilot Privileges and Limitations - Pilot in Command (PIC)

Sections 61.113 (a) & (b) limit private pilots to noncommercial operations. Because the sUASs will not carry a pilot or passengers, the proposed operations can achieve the equivalent level of safety of current operations by requiring the PIC operating the aircraft to have a private pilot’s license rather than a commercial pilot’s license to operate this sUAS. Unlike a conventional aircraft that carries the pilot and passengers, the sUAS is remotely controlled with no living thing on board. The area of operation is controlled and restricted, and all flights are planned and coordinated in advance as set forth in the Operating Manual. The level of safety provided by the requirements included in the Operating Manual meets that provided by a single individual holding a commercial pilot’s certificate operating a conventional aircraft. The risks associated with commercial operations contemplated by Part 61 when drafted, that allowing operations of the sUAS as requested with a private pilot as the PIC exceeds the present level of safety achieved by 14 CFR §61.113 (a) & (b).

14 CFR §91.7 (a): Civil Aircraft Airworthiness

The regulation requires that no person may operate a civil aircraft unless it is in airworthy condition. As there will be no airworthiness certificate issued for the aircraft, should this exemption be granted, no FAA regulatory standard will exist for determining airworthiness. Given the size of the aircraft and the requirements contained in the Operating Manual for maintenance and use of safety checks prior to each flight, as set forth in the Operating Manual, an equivalent level of safety will be provided. However, as required by 14 CFR 91.7(b) a preflight assessment will be conducted.

14 CFR §91.9 (b) (2): Civil Aircraft Flight Manual in the Aircraft

Section 91.9 (b) (2) provides:

No person may U.S.-registered civil aircraft ... (2) For which an Airplane or Rotorcraft Flight Manual is not required by §21.5 of this chapter, unless there is available in the aircraft a current approved Airplane or Rotorcraft Flight Manual, approved manual material, markings, and placards, or any combination thereof.

The sUAS, given its size and configuration, has no ability or place to carry such a flight manual on the aircraft, not only because there is no pilot on board, but because there is no room or capacity to carry such an item on the aircraft.

The equivalent level of safety will be maintained by keeping the Operating Manual at the ground control point where the pilot flying the sUAS will have immediate access to it. The FAA has issued the following exemptions to this regulation: Exemption Nos. 8607, 8737, 8738, 9299, 9299A, 9565, 9565B, 10167, 10167A 10602, 32827, and 10700

14 CFR §91.103: Preflight Action

This regulation requires each PIC to take certain actions before flight to insure the safety of flight. As FAA approved rotorcraft flight manuals will not be provided for the aircraft an exemption will be needed. An equivalent level of safety will be provided as set forth in the Operating Manual. The PIC will take all actions including reviewing weather, flight battery requirements, landing and takeoff distances and aircraft performance data before initiation of flight.

14 CFR §91.109: Flight Instruction

Section 91.109 provides that no person may operate a civil aircraft (except a manned free balloon) that is being used for flight instruction unless that aircraft has fully functioning dual controls. SUASs and remotely piloted aircraft, by their design do not have fully functional dual controls. Flight control is accomplished through the use of a control box that communicates with the aircraft via radio communications. The FAA has approved exemptions for flight training without fully functional dual controls for a number of aircraft and for flight instruction in experimental aircraft. See Exemptions Nos. 5778K & 9862A. The equivalent level of safety is provided by the fact that aircraft will be piloted by a certified private pilot who has previously trained in remote flight areas before attempting flight within filming distance of structures.

14 CFR §91.119: Minimum Safe Altitudes

Section 91.119 establishes safe altitudes for operation of civil aircraft. Section 91.119 (d) allows helicopters to be operated at less than the minimums prescribed, provided the person operating the helicopter complies with any route or altitudes prescribed for helicopters by the FAA. As this exemption is for a sUAS, Big Sky UAV, LLC requests authority to operate at altitudes up to 200 ft. AGL; an exemption may be needed to allow such operations. As set forth herein, the sUAS will never operate at higher than 200 ft. AGL. It will however be operated in a controlled area where buildings and people will not be exposed to operations without their pre-obtained consent.

The equivalent level of safety will be achieved given the size, weight, speed of the sUAS as well as location where it is operated. No flight will be taken without the permission of the property owner and

without advance notice to participants. Because of the advance notice to the property owner and participants in the photographic activity, all affected individuals will be aware of the planned flight operations as set forth in the Operating Manual. Compared to flight operations with aircraft or rotorcraft weighing far more than the maximum 5 lbs. proposed herein and because of the lack of flammable fuel, any risk associated with these operations is far less than those presently presented with conventional aircraft operating at or below 500 ft. AGL. In addition, the low-altitude operations of the sUAS will ensure separation between these small UAS operations and the operations of conventional aircraft that must comply with Section 91.119.

14 CFR §91.121: Altimeter Settings

This regulation requires each person operating an aircraft to maintain cruising altitude by reference to an altimeter that is set "...to the elevation of the departure airport or an appropriate altimeter setting available before departure." As the sUAS will not have a barometric altimeter, but instead a GPS altitude read out, an exemption may be needed. An equivalent level of safety will be achieved by the operator, pursuant to the Operating Manual and Safety Checklist, confirming the altitude of the launch site shown on the GPS altitude indicator before flight.

14 CFR §91.151 (a): Fuel Requirements for Flight in VFR Conditions

Section 91.151 (a) prohibits an individual from beginning "a flight in an airplane 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 – (1) During the day, to fly after that for at least 30 minutes; or (2) At night, to fly after that for at least 45 minutes." The battery powering the sUAS provides approximately 25 minutes of powered flight. To meet the 30 minute reserve requirement in 14 CFR §91.151, sUAS flights would be impossible. Given the limitations on the sUAS's proposed flight area and the location of its proposed operations within a predetermined area, a longer time frame for flight in daylight or night VFR conditions is reasonable.

Big Sky UAV, LLC believes that an exemption from 14 CFR §91.151 (a) falls within the scope of prior exemptions. See Exemption 10673 (allowing Lockheed Martin Corporation to operate without compliance with FAR 91.151 (a)). Operating the sUAS in a tightly controlled area where only people and property owners or official representatives who have signed waivers will be allowed, with less than 30 minutes of reserve fuel, does not engender the type of risks that Section 91.151 (a) was intended to alleviate given the size and speed of the sUAS. Additionally, limiting sUAS flights would greatly reduce the utility for which the exemption will be granted.

Applicant believes that an equivalent level of safety can be achieved by limiting flights to 25 minutes or 25% of battery power whichever happens first. This restriction would be more than adequate return the sUAS to its planned landing zone from anywhere in its limited operating area.

Similar exemptions have been granted to other operations, including Exemptions 2689F, 5745, 10673, and 10808.

14 CFR §91.203 (a) and (b): Carrying Civil Aircraft Certification and Registration

The regulation provides in pertinent part:

(a) Except as provided in §91.715, no person may operate a civil aircraft unless it has within it the following:

(1) An appropriate and current airworthiness certificate...

(b) No person may operate a civil aircraft unless the airworthiness certificate required by paragraph (b) of this section or a special flight authorization issued under §91.715 is displayed at the cabin or cockpit entrance so that it is legible to passengers or crew.

The sUAS fully loaded weighs no more than 5 lbs. and is operated without an onboard Pilot. As such, there is no ability or place to carry certification and registration documents or to display them on the sUAS.

An equivalent level of safety will be achieved by keeping these documents at the ground control point where the Pilot flying the sUAS will have immediate access to them, to the extent they are applicable to the sUAS, and should they be issued. The FAA has issued numerous exemptions to this regulation. A representative sample of other exceptions includes Exemption Nos. 9565, 9665, 9789, 9789A, 9797, 9797A, 9816A, and 10700.

14 CFR §91.405 (a); 407 (a) (2); 417 (a) & (b): Maintenance Inspections

These regulations require that an aircraft operator or owner “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...,” and others shall inspect or maintain the aircraft in compliance with Part 43.

Given that these section and Part 43 apply only to aircraft with an airworthiness certificate, these sections will not apply to the applicant. Maintenance will be accomplished by the operator; pursuant to the Operating manual. An equivalent level of safety will be achieved because these sUASs are very limited in size and will carry a small payload and operate only in restricted areas for limited periods of time. If mechanical issues arise the sUAS can land immediately and will be operating from no higher than 200 ft. AGL. As provided in the Operating Manual, the PIC (operator) will ensure that the sUAS is in working order prior to initiating flight, and perform required maintenance. Moreover, the operator is the person most familiar with the aircraft and best suited to maintain the aircraft in an airworthy condition to provide the equivalent level of safety.

Publication Summary

Pursuant to 14 CFR 11.81(f), the following summary is provided for publication in the Federal Register, should it be determined that publication is needed: Applicant seeks an exemption from the following rules: 14 CFR § 21, subpart H; 14 CFR § 45.23 (b); 14 CFR § 61.113 (a) & (b); 91.7 (a); 91.9 (b) (2); 91.103 (b); 91.109; 91.119; 91.121; 91.151 (a); 91.203 (a) & (b); 91.405 (a); 91.407 (a) (1); 91.409 (a) (2) and 91.417 (a) & (b) to operate commercially Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (5lbs or less) in photography and videography operations.

Privacy

All flights will occur over private or controlled access property with the property owner's prior consent and knowledge, or over remote public land. Image capture of people will rarely take place, but in the event they are, they will have consented prior to being filmed or otherwise have agreed to be in the area where data collection will take place.

Airborne Image Capture

With regard to airborne filming, Big Sky UAV, LLC adheres to all FAA regulations. Further Big Sky UAV, LLC airborne teams operate under the principles of: Safety First, Quality Assurance, Accountability, Reporting, and Training. When approved by the FAA, it is Big Sky UAV, LLC's mandate to treat all sUAS operations the exact same level of professionalism and seriousness as that of conventional aircraft. Approval of exemptions allowing commercial operations of sUASs in our industry will enhance safety by reducing risk. Conventional operations, using turbine or piston powered aircraft, present the risks associated with vehicles that weigh in the neighborhood of 2,000lbs.+, carrying large amounts of Jet A or 100LL (90 gallons for the aircraft previously used by Big Sky UAV, LLC). Such aircraft must fly to and from location. In contrast, a sUAS weighing fewer than 5 lbs, and powered by batteries, eliminates virtually all of the risk, given the substantial reduced mass and lack of combustible fuel carried on board. The sUAS is typically transported to the location via auto, or cargo van, in a medium sized case and is never flown to the site. The sUAS will carry no passengers or crew and, therefore, will not expose them to the risks associated with manned aircraft.

The operation of sUASs, weighing less than 5lbs, conducted in the strict conditions outlined above, will provide an equivalent level of safety supporting the grant of the exemptions requested herein, including exempting the applicant from the requirements of 14 CFR Part 21 and allowing commercial operations. These lightweight aircraft operate at slow speeds, close to the ground, and in a sterile environment. As a result, they are far safer than conventional operations conducted with piston helicopters, or fixed wing aircraft operating in relatively close proximity to the ground and people.

The primary market of interest for Big Sky UAV, LLC utilizing sUASs is aerial videography and photography.

It is anticipated that the airborne image capture process will be accomplished exclusively in daytime VFR environments. To capture the highest quality of resolution the majority of airborne data collections will take place during the 10:00am – 4:00pm window.

Summary of Application

Satisfaction of the criteria provided in Section 333 of the Reform Act of 2012 – size, weight, speed, operating capabilities, proximity to airports and populated areas and operation within visual line of sight and national security – provide more than adequate justification for the grant of the requested exemptions allowing commercial operation of applicant's sUASs for aerial videography and photography. Operating Manual appended hereto. Big Sky UAV, LLC is eagerly standing by to

support the FAA and sUAS community in its quest to establish proper regulations and protocols for the safe introduction of unmanned aircraft into the national airspace.

Sincerely,

Gregory Heide
Big Sky UAV, LLC.
825 Great Northern Blvd. Suite 322
Helena, MT 59601
406-461-7460
greg@bigskyuav.com