

Top News

FAA Says It's Working To Preserve Nation's Airspace

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'Stop Light' Web Site Shows Where It's Safe To Erect Wind Turbines

The FAA says it is making sure the nation's airspace is preserved and protected, amidst competing demands to use this precious resource.



"It seems everybody wants a piece of the sky," the agency writes.

"Commercial airlines and general aviation pilots need to fly. Communities need to build bigger buildings as part of their growth plans. The communications industry has to erect towers. High fuel prices mean more interest in wind turbines for energy.

"To ensure this airspace is not eaten away, the FAA is stepping up cooperative efforts to manage these competing demands for the skies."

Safety is a priority, so the FAA makes sure that development must not encumber navigable airspace and navigation and communication facilities. But to ensure interested parties understand the use of airspace, the FAA is developing a more transparent information system.

Unlike land-based modes of transportation, in which miles of highway or railroad track can be easily tallied, airspace is more difficult to quantify. "The people who put up buildings, towers and wind turbines sometimes don't understand what's going on in the sky. They just see planes flying in one direction or another -- and a lot of empty sky in which to build," the agency notes.

So to help the public understand how the airspace is structured, and to let them know what is needed to keep it safe and unencumbered, the FAA is sharing information electronically. It is also encouraging the use of a common operating system for people who use the national airspace system, both on the ground and in the air.

Such transparency helps project planners, who from the outset have an understanding of where and how high a building can go, for example.

The FAA is also increasing collaboration to prevent problems before they happen. For example, the FAA has worked with Homeland Security and the Department of Defense to establish a Web site with a "stop light" system for people wanting to erect wind turbines.

Builders put in their location and if they are in a "green" area they won't affect radar at all. Coordinates showing a "yellow" light mean radar might be affected, but mitigating solutions could exist. A "red" light indicates radar operation will certainly be affected.

As part of this increased collaboration, the FAA is hosting a conference September 29 to October 2 in Las Vegas, NV. Competition for the Sky 2008 will bring together federal, state and local authorities, and commercial and private airspace users, to provide insight and guidance on airspace operations and requirements.

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