

NAAA eNewsletter

Louisiana Operator Dwayne O'Brien Discusses Ag Aviation Safety with Local TV Station

A spate of recent ag aviation accidents, including a fatal crash in southwest Louisiana on Aug. 2, did not go unnoticed by a Lake Charles, Louisiana, TV newscast. Reporting on the second crash involving a crop duster in two days, NBC affiliate KPLC cited three other recent ag aviation accidents, including fatalities on July 23 and July 26. In fact, the Aug. 2 fatal crash in Louisiana was the fourth fatal ag aviation accident in the span of 11 days in the U.S.

While it is common for a fatal accident to attract increased media attention, Dwayne O'Brien, NAAA's board member, 2021 treasurer and the owner/operator of O'Brien Flying Service in nearby Iowa, Louisiana, took issue with the safety connotations implied by KPLC TV's news report about the fatal ag plane crash and contacted the station to politely register his displeasure. The upshot? KPLC offered to interview O'Brien on camera about "crop duster safety." He readily agreed.

KPLC aired the resulting story the next day, on Aug. 4. In it, O'Brien explained that agricultural aviation is vital to producing food and fiber. He also discussed the safety features found in today's state-of-the-art ag aircraft and an inherent risk low-altitude pilots must contend with.

"Aviation by itself is inherently dangerous, and when you add the agricultural aspect of it where you're flying in lower proximity to the ground, you don't have the time to react. You've got to react quickly to a situation that occurs—emergency procedure and operation," O'Brien told KPLC. "The primary thing you have to do is recognize and define the problem if something does occur. But being that low to the ground, the reaction time is very, very short."

As far as safety factors go, O'Brien said ag pilots wear "personal protective gear. They've got their flight suits—some of them may be Nomex fire retardant. They wear an aviator helmet, a crashworthy helmet, which is required. We've got air bags installed on the newer aircraft... which we have on ours. We've got wire-cutting devices on the aircraft on the landing gear. We've got a ballistic windshield installed on the aircraft for birds. You [can] hit birds that will come through. So there's many things that we can do. If it's out there, safety-wise, we get it; we do it. It's just one of those things you have to do to protect the pilot. And that's the main thing, is just safety and to bring that guy home tonight."

NAAA appreciates O'Brien's efforts to tell the full story of ag aviation safety to the media. The full news segment with O'Brien is available [here](#). The piece also aired Aug. 5 on the morning news broadcast of Fox affiliate KVHP. (The two Lake Charles stations have a shared services agreement.)

For information on positively discussing the multitude of aviation safety protections aerial applicators take, see the "Aviation Safety Aspects of Ag Aviation" webpage of NAAA's Media Relations Kit at AgAviation.org/aviationsafety.

Ag Aviation Industry Saddened by Loss of William Gill Pias in 8th Fatal Accident of 2022

The members and staff of NAAA express their sympathies and condolences to the family and friends of William Gill Pias. William was fatally injured in an ag accident on Aug. 2. He was 44 years old at the time of his passing.

William was born on June 28, 1978. He was involved in numerous businesses throughout his life, including farming and flying, which were two of his biggest passions. William is survived by his wife, Brittany; his daughter, Anna Pias Fournet and her husband, John; his son, Huxley Pias; his mother, Marilyn Merritt; his two sisters, Susan Smith and husband, Robert, and Katherine Henry and husband, Greg, and his brother, John Pias and wife, Jill.

William's visitation was held on Aug. 5 and 6 at the Lone Pine Assembly of God Church. The funeral service followed visitation on Saturday, Aug. 6. Please keep his family and friends in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time. Click [here](#) to read William's full obituary, send a sympathy card or flowers, plant a tree in his memory, or share a memory.

NAAA Pilot Member Eric Klindt Promotes Aerial Application on Talk Radio Host Joel Heitkamp's Show

NAAA member Eric Klindt discussed agricultural aviation's history and advances on *News & Views with Joel Heitkamp*, a talk radio program on KFGO-AM, on Aug. 3. Heitkamp's show is the No. 1 talk show in the Upper Midwest. Klindt lives in Campbell, Minnesota, and flies for Wilbur-Ellis out of its base in Wahpeton, North Dakota. He appeared on Heitkamp's morning radio show on the 101st anniversary of the aerial application industry.

"This day, 101 years ago, the first aerial application was taking place," Klindt said before explaining that an aerial crop dusting experiment was attempted in 1921 to combat an outbreak of Catalpa sphinx moth caterpillars eating a grove of catalpa trees. Catalpa trees were used for making telephone poles, fence posts and railroad ties. "That's what started aerial application," Klindt said.

Klindt's quick wit was on display when Heitkamp asked if the aerial dusting experiment by Lt. John MacCready and Etienne Dormoy

worked. “Absolutely. It did. It saved it,” Klindt said. “Because it was hard—obviously with trees, they had no method of getting up there. So that’s why they tried this. [There] was a university research person in the back seat running the crank and Lt. MacCready flying the plane, and it worked, and it saved the trees.” Heitkamp burst into laughter at the next words out of Klindt’s mouth as he continued his answer. “Which now I think about it,” Klindt said, drawing his next words out slowly, “so it saved the trees to make power poles that we now fly around, and I have to contend with all the time. But hey! Maybe we didn’t think that through back then. I like it when they bury them now. I’m a big fan of burying electrical wires.”

Beyond spraying, the radio host marveled at ag aircraft’s versatility. “I’m in an actual Air Tractor 802, so it’s really the biggest spray plane that they make, but this same plane is used for firefighting,” Klindt said. “They do a lot of forestry firefighting with the 802s. Seeding—that’s probably been the biggest thing. About 20 years ago, I started spreading dry material—basically cover crops—and I do so much more of that type of work now and fertilizing—dry fertilizer.”

NAAA applauds Klindt for a job well done promoting the aerial application industry’s 101st anniversary. A recording of Klindt’s segment is not available, but certain segments of the show are archived in the [News & Views with Joel Heitkamp podcast](#).

Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Magazine Highlights 12 Key Events in Ag Aviation’s First Century

The July 2022 issue of *Badger Common Tater* from the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association includes a nice spread on agricultural aviation’s 100th anniversary highlighting pivotal events from the industry’s first century. With the help of NAAA, *Badger Common Tater* focused on 12 key events included among the dozens of industry milestones listed on the [centennial timeline](#) NAAA created. Naturally, the look at key events begins on Aug. 3, 1921, with the experimental application of insecticide dust from a biplane flown by U.S. Army test pilot John MacCready, which proved to be a tremendous success. The key events continue through current times where aerially seeding cover crops has emerged as an important component in strategies to address climate change with carbon sequestration. The complete article is available [here](#).

FAA Adopting a New AD for Certain Continental Aerospace Technologies and Textron Lycoming Reciprocating Engines

The FAA implemented an airworthiness directive (AD) for certain Continental Aerospace Technologies and Textron Lycoming reciprocating engines. The AD was prompted by a report of a manufacturing quality escape of improperly lubricated roller bearings installed in certain magnetos, which may result in overheating and magneto seizure. The engines affected are: Continental Aerospace Technologies Inc. GTSIO-520, IO-346, IO-470, IO-520, IO-550, LTSIO-520, O-470, TSIO-520 and TSIOL-550 series model reciprocating engines, Lycoming Engines AEIO-320, AEIO-360, AEIO-540, AIO-320, AIO-360, GO-480, GSO-480, HIO-360, HIO-540, IGO-480, IGO-540, IGSO-480, IGSO-540, IO-320, IO-360, IO-540, LIO-360, LTIO-540, O-235, O-320, O-360, O-540, TIGO-541, TIO-360, TIO-540, TIO-541, TVO-435, VO-435 and VO-540 series model reciprocating engines, and Textron Lycoming/Subsidiary of Textron Inc. IO-720 series model reciprocating engines.

The AD requires action on affected engines within 25 hours time-in-service after the effective date of Aug. 15, 2022. Although the AD is being adopted, the FAA is still accepting comments that it receives by Sept. 12 and may change the AD as a result of those comments. To view the complete AD or to comment, click [here](#).

NAAA-NAAREF Board Meetings Oct. 7-8 in Oklahoma City

The October 2022 NAAA & NAAREF Board and Committee meetings will take place in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. [Click here](#) to view a schedule. Please note: All board books will now be provided electronically. Board and Committee members will receive a link and directions to download the electronic board book approximately one week before the meetings. The board book can be downloaded to your computer, tablet or you can print your committee items.

All meetings are open to NAAA members. If you are not a board or committee member but you’re interested in attending, please contact [Lindsay Barber](#) for more details.

Hotel Details

Skirvin Hilton Oklahoma City
One Park Avenue
Oklahoma City, OK 73102
Hotel Phone: (405) 272-3040

- **Reservations:** [Click here](#) or call 800-4HONORS and refer to NAAA/NAAREF committee meetings.
- **Room Rate:** \$149/night
- **Room Block Closes:** Sept. 10, 2022

Three Weeks Left to Apply for \$20K in Scholarship Aid Available for Aspiring Ag Pilots

From seeking a mentor to finding the funds for training, the road to becoming an ag pilot is fraught with obstacles, but having \$5,000 in seed money certainly helps. Thanks to the generous support of BASF and Thrush Aircraft, \$20,000 in aid is available through the **2022 NAAA “Ag Wings of Tomorrow” Scholarship Program** to assist four aspiring ag pilots in their journey.

The goal of NAAA’s “Ag Wings of Tomorrow” Scholarship Program is to strengthen the aerial application industry by helping operator members bring new pilots into the profession and help fund their training. Applicants must be sponsored by an NAAA Operator member. Scholarship recipients may use the proceeds for flight training or aviation or ag-related coursework at a university, college, community college or other institution of higher learning. A stipend for a trainee in an NAAA Operator-sponsored apprentice program is also permissible. The scholarship program is administered by NAAA and funded by educational grants from BASF and Thrush.

This year, NAAA will award up to four scholarships valued at \$5,000 each. Investing in aspiring ag aviators is a win-win for NAAA Operator members and individuals seeking training funds to support their pursuit of becoming a professional ag pilot.

How to Apply

To be considered for the 2022 scholarship, along with completing the two-part application, every applicant must submit:

- **A letter of recommendation** from the NAAA Operator member sponsoring the applicant.
- **An essay of 250 words or less** explaining why the applicant wants to pursue a career in agricultural aviation and how they would use NAAA’s “Ag Wings of Tomorrow” Scholarship to further their education and training.
- **A one-page résumé or list of activities** detailing all agricultural and aviation experiences, education and training.

Pictured above from left to right, last year NAAA awarded \$5,000 scholarships to Thomas Wiltz of Lafayette, Louisiana; Kolby Pfyl of Orland, California; Weston Meise of Moses Lake, Washington; and Autumn Smith of Cozad, Nebraska. NAAA will announce the recipients of the 2022 “Ag Wings of Tomorrow” Scholarships in December at the Ag Aviation Expo in Knoxville, Tennessee.

To learn more about the 2022 NAAA “Ag Wings of Tomorrow” Scholarship, review the instructions included with the **2022 application**. The scholarship application can also be found at AgAviation.org/scholarship. Please contact NAAA at (202) 546-5722 or information@agaviation.org for clarification about any of the application requirements.

While the applicant must be sponsored by an NAAA Operator member, NAAA membership is not a prerequisite for applying for the scholarship. Still, becoming an **NAAA Associate member** is an excellent way for candidates to learn more about the industry and augment their training.

The deadline to apply for the 2022 “Ag Wings of Tomorrow” Scholarship is Aug. 31.

2022 NAAA Award Nominations Due Sept. 9

Eight recipients received NAAA Awards in 2021. Who will be among this year’s awardees? Nominations are due by Sept. 9.

One of the highlights of each NAAA convention is the chance to honor a distinct group of the committed individuals and companies for their service to the agricultural aviation industry. The aerial application industry is filled with exceptional people who go above and beyond the call of duty, often with little fanfare. Make someone’s day, year or career by nominating him or her for a 2022 NAAA Award!

NAAA’s online submission form is the fastest and simplest way to nominate someone in just a few clicks, but the traditional PDF-based awards forms are also available options. The following submission methods are available at AgAviation.org/awards.

- **2022 Awards Nomination Online Submission Form** (recommended)
- **2022 Award Nomination Form** (Fillable PDF)
- **2022 Award Nomination Form** (print version)

The online submission form is the fastest and simplest way to nominate someone in just a few clicks, but the traditional PDF-based awards forms are also available options. Completed entries using the traditional PDF forms may be emailed or faxed to NAAA at information@agaviation.org or (202) 546-5726 (fax).

There are nine NAAA Award categories and one NAAREF Award, but don’t delay. The nomination deadline is Sept. 9.

NAAA Award Categories

Agri-naut Award: Honors an agricultural aircraft operator, operating organization or allied member company that has made an outstanding contribution in the field of ag aircraft operations. The achievement cited shall have contributed to the “state-of-the-art” for the benefit of the agricultural aircraft industry as a whole.

Allied Industry Individual Award: Recognizes an NAAA member or staff and/or an allied industry individual who has significantly contributed their efforts for the benefit of the allied industry and the aerial application industry. *(Presented by the NAAA Allied Industry Committee.)*

Delta Air Lines “Puffer” Award: Recognizes an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the design of agricultural aircraft and/or related equipment.

Evans-Christopher Operation S.A.F.E. Award: Recognizes individuals or entities that have made outstanding contributions to the Operation S.A.F.E. program. *(Presented by NAAREF)*

John Robert Horne Memorial Award: Honors a pilot with five or fewer years of experience in the agricultural aviation industry who has an exemplary safety record and has contributed to safety in ag aviation. ***This award no longer has carryover nominations from year to year; a new nomination must be submitted every year.***

Larsen-Miller Community Service Award: Recognizes outstanding contributions by a member to his or her community.

Opal and Bill Binnion Memorial Award: Acknowledges those who contribute to NAAA in its efforts to educate the public about aerial application.

Richard “Dick” Reade Memorial Award: Recognizes outstanding contributions by an allied industry member and their company.

William O. Marsh Safety Award: Recognizes significant achievements in safety, safety education or an outstanding operational safety program.

Zoren and Joan O’Brien Memorial Outstanding Service Award: Awards outstanding service to the commercial agricultural aviation industry or to its association.

The 2022 NAAA Award recipients will be announced in the fall and honored at the Excellence in Ag Aviation Banquet Dec. 8 in Knoxville, Tennessee.

2022 Support Scholarship Contest Entries Due Sept. 15

Attention, higher-education students: Don’t pass up the opportunity to vie for a combined \$3,000 in educational scholarships. NAAA is accepting submissions for the **2022 Support Scholarship Media Contest** through Sept. 15. Prizes include a \$2,000 scholarship from the NAAA Support Committee and a \$1,000 scholarship, courtesy of Covington Aircraft.

As it was in 2021, the theme for this year’s contest is **“What role does ag aviation play in producing a local commodity?”**

The 2022 Support Scholarship Media Contest is open to any individual who is sponsored by an NAAA member. The scholarship is not restricted to individuals pursuing a “flying career” and can be used toward any educational pursuit beyond high school (at any age).

Entrants must be a senior in high school or registered in higher education by the fall semester of 2022. Previous winners are not eligible to compete. Contestants have the choice of submitting an essay of at least 1,500 words or a video or PowerPoint presentation at least five minutes long.

Submissions should be sent as an email attachment by Sept. 15 to information@agaviation.org. More information about eligibility requirements, contest guidelines and sample essays from past scholarship recipients are available [here](#).

A Bittersweet 101: The Ag Aviation Industry’s Centennial Anniversary Concludes, Now Onward to the Bicentennial

On Aug. 3, 2022, the aerial application industry turned 101 years old. It was on Aug. 3, 1921, that Lt. John A. Macready piloted a modified Curtiss JN-6 “Super Jenny” airplane while passenger Etienne Dormoy manually dispensed lead arsenate dust over catalpa trees in Ohio in a successful experiment to kill sphinx moth larvae. Less than 1% of the insects remained alive on the catalpa trees after six days of observation of the targeted area. The speed, efficiency and overwhelming effectiveness of the aerial dusting experiment spawned the birth of the agricultural aviation industry.

Planning for agricultural aviation’s centennial began four years ago in 2018. NAAA has invested significant time and resources to raise agricultural aviation’s profile in the eyes of the public in unprecedented ways. Beyond educating the public about the industry’s essential work, NAAA has emphasized how the industry has evolved technologically over the past 10 decades and the exceptional way in which aerial applicators help farmers provide a safe, affordable and abundant supply of food, fiber and bioenergy, and deliver lifesaving air support through public health spraying and aerial firefighting.

Some of the centennial milestones include:

- Launched AgAviation100.com, the 100th anniversary website.
- Released an industry centennial timeline showcased online, in print and at live events as a museum-quality showpiece underscoring the industry’s remarkable history and importance.
- Published the [book](#) *Agriculture’s Air Force: 100 Years of Aerial Application*, which comprehensively captures the industry’s history, importance and soul.

- Released the **trailer**, **consumer** and **extended** versions of the centennial documentary, “Aerial Applicators’ Growing Role: 100 Years of Agricultural Aviation.”
- Executed a national media and public outreach campaign coordinated by PR consultant Steve Powell.
- Promoted a century of agricultural aviation excellence at a series of special events starting at EAA AirVenture 2021 and continuing with a celebration on Aug. 3, 2021, in Leesburg, Virginia, featuring Dusty Crophopper, at the National Agricultural Aviation Museum and Hall of Fame in Jackson, Mississippi, two events at the Smithsonian’s Air & Space Museum at Dulles International Airport in the Washington, D.C., region, and a display on the National Mall at Ag Day 2022. The 100th anniversary events concluded with the Snow S-2A ag aircraft being displayed at AirVenture 2022 on Boeing Square before over 650,000 visitors. There were multiple other events not mentioned.
- Facilitated the donation of the life-size, live-action ag plane version of the Disney character Dusty Crophopper on behalf of Rusty and Lea Lindeman (*pictured below in center*) to the Smithsonian Institution’s National Air and Space Museum, which is on display to the public in perpetuity.

The public relations campaign promoting the 100th anniversary has delivered high-value results in terms of media coverage, exposure and “ad value equivalency,” a metric that assigns a monetary value to the type of media coverage earned. Over a 30-day period that coincides with last August, the campaign netted nearly 200 media mentions, with a potential audience reach of 400 million consumers. According to a media monitoring service, the ad value equivalency for that amount of coverage was worth \$10 million. The 100th anniversary campaign has been so successful and garnered so much media attention that NAAA is now completely rethinking its communications strategy to focus more of its resources on external communications to the public.

The centennial of agricultural aviation has been an exciting, momentous event. So much so that it is sad to see it now over. With that said, the future of agricultural aviation is full of necessity, technological progression and yet-to-be-thought-of potential that we eye the future with great anticipation. And we look forward to the industry’s bicentennial in 99 years.

Missouri Man Charged with Attempted Murder and Four Other Felonies After AT-802 Shooting Incident in July

A 62-year-old Kidder, Missouri, man has been arrested and charged with attempted murder and other violent felony crimes for allegedly shooting an ag plane with a high-powered rifle while an ag pilot was treating crops in Caldwell County, Missouri, last month.

Members of the Caldwell County Sheriff’s Department assisted the FBI in serving a federal search warrant on a residence near Kidder, Missouri, at approximately 6 a.m. CT on July 29. Donald V. Bates Jr., of Kidder, Missouri, was taken into custody and being held without bond on charges of second-degree attempted murder, unlawful use of a weapon, first-degree assault, felony property damage and armed criminal assault, Caldwell County Sheriff Mitchell K. Allen **announced**.

“I’m glad that the FBI, the ATF [Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives] and local law enforcement pursued it, found him and charged him. At this point, it’s going to be between him, the judge and 12 of his peers,” ag pilot Adam Towe told the NAAA eNewsletter. “Honestly, part of me feels bad for him, but at the same time, I’m glad that they caught him.”

As the NAAA eNewsletter **first reported on July 21**, Towe was three passes into the second to last field of his day on July 10 when he heard a loud pop as he was banking to turn back into a field of beans. He had just flown over a set of trees, so his initial thought was he had hit something, possibly a dead branch. Towe climbed to a safe altitude to examine his gauges. The gauges looked good, and he was able to finish applying fungicide to his last two fields before ferrying 30 miles back to the airport. After shutting the airplane down, Towe noticed a fuel leak coming from the right side of the wing. After he walked around for a closer look, he discovered a bullet hole. The AT-802 had sustained two bullet holes, in fact. Another bullet had pierced the spinner surrounding the prop.

Towe, a contract pilot flying for Mid Missouri Spray Service, called his boss. They referred to NAAA’s **shooting-response checklist** and notified the local authorities and the FBI. They called the sheriffs’ offices in Ray County and Caldwell County, Missouri, two counties within the Kansas City metro area. They also notified the FSDOs in Kansas City and Little Rock, Arkansas, to inform the FAA.

The Caldwell County Sheriff’s Office instructed them not to pull the bullet out of the wing until a deputy arrived at the airport to examine the aircraft and take possession of the shell. The shooting happened at 5:30 p.m. on Sunday, so the deputy came on Monday, July 11. After recovering bullet fragments and surveying the damage, investigators concluded that the shots must have come from a large caliber firearm.

Per **The Kansas City Star**:

Witnesses told police they heard what sounded like gunshots coming from Bates’ residence around the time that the plane was hit. One reported hearing as many as 15 rounds fired.

Two months before the shooting, the sheriff’s office investigated a separate incident where another pilot accused Bates of threatening him with a gun while he was flying in the area. That pilot reported seeing Bates wave a gun around as the pilot flew roughly 100 feet overhead.

Bates was later charged with brandishing a firearm in connection with that incident. *The Star* reported that in charging documents filed on July 29, a detective wrote that Bates presented a danger to society. He wrote in court papers that “a catastrophic chain of events” could have occurred had the pilot been shot in the air.

Thankfully, Towe (*pictured at right*) was unharmed in the shooting incident. Furthermore, other than the sheet metal, there was no structural damage to the aircraft. Removing the spinner covering the prop also revealed the hub had not been damaged. The damage to the AT-802 was ultimately minimal but not cost-free. A mechanic was able to repair the plane the next day, but Towe was grounded for one day. Damage to the aircraft was estimated to be roughly \$12,000, along with \$25,000 in lost wages because of the time needed to make repairs.

Tips for Responding to an Aircraft Shooting

Over and above state laws, it is a federal crime to shoot at aircraft, including unmanned aircraft systems. Penalties can be as severe as 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Even the threat of shooting down an aircraft can result in a five-year prison sentence.

In 2017, after a series of shootings directed at ag aircraft, NAAA developed a [checklist](#) of actions operators and pilots can take in the event someone discharges a firearm at their aircraft. The checklist includes tips on how to report a shooting incident and spread the word to bring the perpetrator to justice. NAAA's shooting-response checklist is available [here](#) to print. It contains the following steps along with NAAA's advice.

Checklist for Pilots Subjected to Discharge of a Firearm Targeting an Ag Aircraft

- Inform Local Law Enforcement
- Contact the FBI
- Report it to the FAA National Safety Hotline
- Call your Local Flight Standards Office (FSO)
- File a NASA Aviation Safety Report
- Tell Other Pilots
- Notify Local News Media
- Contact Your Insurance Agent if Warranted

In addition to its shooting-response checklist, NAAA is available to offer additional assistance in the event of an ag aircraft shooting. Contact NAAA at (202) 546-5722 for further support.

"If it happens to you, follow the checklist. Let's stop this stuff," Towe said.

NAAA & Air Tractor Exhibit Before a Record-Breaking 650,000 at EAA AirVenture 2022

Two weeks ago, NAAA, Air Tractor and volunteers exhibited and participated at the Experimental Aircraft Association's (EAA) annual expo and airshow, AirVenture in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, where 650,000 attendees broke the show's attendance record.

Star-Flex's Jane Barber Pitlick chats with attendees at NAAA's booth at AirVenture 2022 in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Air Tractor displayed its dual-cockpit AT-802 firefighting aircraft at the show, and to close out the 100th anniversary year of the aerial application industry, Pete Jones with Air Repair in Cleveland, Mississippi, flew the Snow S-2A to Oshkosh. The S-2A, which was built by the godfather of modern ag aircraft, Leland Snow, in the 1950s, was displayed at Boeing Plaza along with NAAA's 100th anniversary [timeline](#) of the industry and viewed by thousands of attendees.

Air Tractor President Jim Hirsch, Air Repair's Pete Jones and NAAA CEO Andrew Moore pose next to the Snow S-2A on display at AirVenture 2022 in Boeing Plaza.

In addition, NAAA staff and volunteers spoke with hundreds of attendees throughout the week. Over the past six years of NAAA exhibiting at Oshkosh, 571 prospective pilots interested in a career in ag aviation have signed up with NAAA, including 125 last week. NAAA will provide them with substantive association materials and emails over the next year. The total number of prospective ag pilots that have visited NAAA's AirVenture booth over six years equals nearly 20% of the current working ag pilots in the aerial application industry.

To further reach pilots, NAAA CEO Andrew Moore gave an educational presentation to AirVenture attendees on how to pursue a career in ag aviation, along with NAAA Florida Board Member Lee Turnquist and Mike Rhodes of Air Tractor.

Lee Turnquist addresses AirVenture attendees at NAAA's aerial application information forum.

AirVenture, organized by EAA each summer at Wittman Regional Airport, is a weeklong celebration of aviation. The event had 650,000 attendees, 803 exhibitors and approximately 10,000 aircraft on display. EAA cited good weather, the return of international visitors following the lifting of COVID-related travel restrictions and programs such as the flight displays associated with the 75th anniversary of the U.S. Air Force as contributing factors to this year's crowds.

Thank you to Air Tractor and the following member volunteers:

- **Air Tractor – Jim and Leatha Hirsch, Mike Rhodes, Chris Lockhart, Antonie York, Stephan Nelle and Dan Criswell**

- **Pete Jones**, Air Repair, Cleveland, Mississippi
- **Lee and Nancy Turnquist**, Whirly Birds, Lake Wales, Florida
- **Jane Barber Pitlick and Lilly Paxton**, Star-Flex, Onida, South Dakota
- **Damon and Mary Reabe**, Reabe Spraying Service & Dairyland Aviation in Waupun, Wisconsin

Three boys check out Air Tractor's dual-cockpit AT-802F aircraft.

NAAA also spent time speaking with attendees about the importance of agricultural aviation to food, fiber and bioenergy production and forestry and public health protection by distributing its **"Flying for Your Food" brochure**.

NAAA Mourns the Loss of Russell "Rusty" Johnson, 6th Ag Aviator Lost in 2022

Russell Anthony "Rusty" Johnson was fatally injured July 26 in the sixth fatal ag aviation accident of the season. Born on June 23, 1968, in Greenville, Mississippi, Rusty was 54 years old at the time of his passing. The members and staff of NAAA offer their sympathies and condolences to Rusty's family and friends.

Rusty served in the United States Coast Guard from 1987 to 1992. During this time, while stationed in Two Rivers, Wisconsin, he met his wife of 27 years, Carrie. They later moved to Lake Village, Arkansas, where they had three children. Rusty was very involved in his children's activities as well as various charities, associations and the Lake Village Presbyterian Church. He had been an ag pilot for over 25 years and loved his profession. He also enjoyed flying, hunting, grilling and being an auctioneer.

Rusty is survived by his wife Carrie, their two daughters, Alyssa and Miranda, their son, Mason Johnson, three brothers and sisters-in-law, a brother-in-law and numerous nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles and cousins. His visitation was held July 30 at the Delta Men's Association in Eudora, Arkansas, and was followed by a celebration of Rusty's life. Please make donations in Rusty's memory to the Delta Men's Association, 104 Portland Road, Eudora, AR 71640, or the Make-A-Wish Foundation, 1780 Moriah Woods Boulevard, Suite 10, Memphis, TN 38117.

7th Fatal Ag Accident of 2022 Claims Life of Brady Penner

The ag aviation industry continues to mourn after another fatal accident, the third fatal accident in only an eight-day period. On July 30, Brady Penner of Weatherford, Oklahoma, was killed while spraying corn in Iowa. The members and staff of NAAA express their sympathies and condolences to his family and friends.

Brady was born on Sept. 10, 1976, in Weatherford, Oklahoma, and was 45 at the time of his passing. He graduated from Weatherford High School in 1995. He had a love of aviation from a young age and received his pilot's license before his drivers' license. He began his career in ag aviation in the late 1990s. He flew in numerous states while simultaneously earning a bachelor's degree and then a master's degree.

In lieu of flowers, a memorial fund has been set up to help with his children's education. To contribute, you can call the Bank of Hydro at (580) 774-1300 or mail a check to Bank of Hydro, c/o Memorial Fund for Brady Penner, 406 N. Washington Avenue, Weatherford, OK 73096. There is also a GoFundMe account dedicated to helping Brady's wife and children, which can be found [here](#).

Brady is survived by his wife of 17 years, Mikki, and their two children, daughter Isla and son Lachlan. He is also survived by his mother Laquita Littlebird; his father, Ron Penner, and Penner's wife, Nancy; mother-in-law Vickie Haney; father-in-law Chuck Williams; and his sister, Allison O'Donnel and her husband, Devin. The memorial service for Brady occurred Aug. 5 at the First Baptist Church of Weatherford, Oklahoma. Please keep Mikki, Isla, Lachlan and the rest of his family in your prayers as they deal with his tragic loss.

L3Harris and Air Tractor Sky Warden Team Selected for U.S. Military Contract

The U.S. Special Operations Command has selected L3Harris Technologies and Air Tractor Inc.'s AT-802U Sky Warden system for its Armed Overwatch program. The program includes delivery of up to 75 manned, fixed-wing aircraft, with an initial program contract award of \$170 million. The indefinite-quantity, indefinite-delivery contract has a cost ceiling of \$3 billion.

The fleet of modern multi-mission aircraft will address the U.S. Special Operations Command's need for a deployable, sustainable single-engine fixed-wing, crewed and affordable aircraft system, the companies stated in a joint news release. It will provide close air support, precision strike, armed intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), strike coordination and forward air controller requirements for use in austere and permissive environments. The aircraft will be used in irregular warfare operations.

"We want to deliver game-changing, modular solutions to U.S. special operators for their hardest missions, and Sky Warden does just that," Christopher Kubasik, L3Harris's chairman and CEO, said.

L3Harris expects to rapidly modify last summer's Armed Overwatch prototype demonstrator into the production configuration and provide for customer weapon system testing in approximately six months. Production of new, fully modified Armed Overwatch mission-configured aircraft will begin in 2023 at L3Harris's Tulsa, Oklahoma, modification center, following initial production at Air Tractor's aircraft

manufacturing facility in Olney, Texas. Six new aircraft will be delivered under the low-rate initial production Lot 1.

“Sky Warden will bring powerful and affordable close air support, precision strike, armed ISR, and command and control capabilities directly to special operations forces in the battlefield,” said Sean Stackley, L3Harris’s president of integrated mission systems, added.

The production-ready Sky Warden system can be tailored for a variety of mission requirements to meet U.S. mission needs.

“The Sky Warden design reflects our commitment to America’s national security, and the AT-802U will be equipped with everything we’ve learned manufacturing aircraft over the past 46 years,” Air Tractor President Jim Hirsch said. “The L3Harris team is an excellent partner, and our production and engineering staff are ready to immediately deliver this world-class product to our nation’s special forces.”

NAAA Responds to Wine Magazine over Ag Aircraft Photo Negatively Misleading about Aerial Application

On July 20, NAAA became aware that *Wine Enthusiast* magazine had published an [article on dicamba drift](#) using a misleading photograph of an ag aircraft making an application even though ag aircraft are prohibited from making aerial applications of new dicamba formulations. The article focused on the harm done to the Texas wine industry by alleged drift from dicamba applications on cotton crops modified to be tolerant to dicamba. While the article itself does not mention aerial application, the photograph clearly implies that ag aircraft are at least partially responsible for the alleged drift and damage.

On July 21, NAAA sent a [letter to the editor](#) of *Wine Enthusiast* pointing out that the photo is misleading because agricultural aircraft are prohibited from making aerial applications of the new dicamba formulations on dicamba-tolerant cotton. NAAA made sure to inform the magazine that all alleged incidents of dicamba drift from cotton applications would have been the result of ground applications, not aerial. The letter suggested the editor or author verify these facts by reviewing pesticide labels for the new dicamba formulations.

This is not the first time NAAA has had to respond to misleading photos that associate aerial application with applications of the new dicamba formulations. In 2018 *The Wall Street Journal* also used a photograph of an ag aircraft with an article on dicamba drift incidents. In that case, [NAAA’s response](#) led to a correction from the newspaper.

NAAA President Jim Perrin Interviewed by USDA Radio

It’s no surprise to NAAA members that many of the most skillful and professional pilots are not employed by the military or the big airlines—they’re employed by farmers, ranchers and foresters. 2022 NAAA President Jim Perrin spoke with the USDA’s radio branch about the modern aerial application industry in an interview recorded at National Ag Day on the Mall in Washington, D.C., for a segment that dropped July 26. Listen as Jim explains the important role Agriculture’s Air Force serves [here](#).

NAAA Hits New Facebook Milestone: 11,000 Followers!

Thanks to those who helped NAAA attain 11,000 Facebook followers! Help continue promoting agricultural aviation by sharing our posts on your newsfeed, which will allow your friends to see them. Please also invite your friends to “Like” the National Agricultural Aviation Association [Facebook page](#). They’ll get updates throughout the year on what ag pilots do to aid farmers in producing a safe, affordable and abundant supply of food, fiber and bioenergy, in addition to protecting forestry and controlling health-threatening pests.

NAAA’s social media reach has steadily increased each year. The association reached 10,000 followers last August and has grown by about a thousand followers annually for the past five years.

You can also follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) at @AgAviationNAAA.

Ag Aviation Industry Mourns the Loss of Charles Stokes in 5th Fatal Accident of 2022

R.I.P. Charles Stokes, July 3, 1999–July 23, 2022

NAAA members and staff mourn the loss of Charles Stokes of Arkansas and express their sincere condolences and sympathies to his family and friends. Charles Garland Stokes, 23, passed away while fulfilling his dream as a crop duster. He was killed in the fifth fatal ag accident of 2022 on July 23 after his ag aircraft hit wires connected to a radio tower in Parkin, Arkansas, the Cross County Sheriff stated.

Charles was born July 3, 1999, in Memphis, Tennessee. He was a 2017 graduate of Marion High School in Marion, Arkansas, and attended college at the University of Arkansas. Charles obtained his private pilot’s license before graduating high school and later earned his commercial license. He began his career as an ag pilot for Stokes Flying Services in 2021.

Charles’ love for flying began at an early age, and it seemed natural that he would one day follow in the footsteps of his father, ag pilot Tracey Stokes, and grandfather Dennie Stokes, who founded Stokes Flying Service in Earle, Arkansas, in 1981 and served as NAAA’s president in 2003. In 2005, Charles’s grandmother, Lou Stokes, served as president of the Women of the National Agricultural Aviation

Association (WNAAA). Dennie Stokes also became co-owner of Mid-Continent Aircraft Corp. in Hayti, Missouri, after the company's founder (and NAAA's first president), Richard "Dick" Reade, passed away in the spring of 2021. At a memorial service for Reade at Mid-Continent's headquarters on May 1, 2021, Charles was one of the pilots who flew in the missing man flyover formation in Reade's memory, along with Tracey and Greg Stokes, his father and uncle, and Tommy Anderson of Tommy's Flying Service in Sherrill, Arkansas.

In addition to flying, Charles enjoyed playing and watching football. He was a Tom Brady fanatic and got the pleasure of seeing him play in Tampa last year. In his spare time, Charles enjoyed hunting with his dad, going to the lake with friends, spending time with his family, and being the best uncle to his nephew, Kody.

Charles is survived by his parents, Tracey and Tracy Stokes, his sister, Emma Stokes, and nephew, Kody Stokes. He also leaves his grandparents Milton and Sharon Southall and Dennie and Lou Stokes, aunt Crystal (Scott) Hill, uncle Greg (April) Stokes, cousins Brock and Ebby Hill and Reese Stokes, extended family and many friends.

Visitation and services for Charles Stokes occurred July 27 at Marion First United Methodist Church in Marian, Arkansas. NAAA sent sympathy flowers to Tracey and Tracy Stokes and Dennie and Lou Stokes on behalf of the NAAA's board, members and staff.

The family requests that memorials in Charles Stokes' memory be sent to [St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital](#).

FAA Responds to NAAA's Request to Change Letter of Authorization Policy

After working with the FAA for several years to address the issue, NAAA received a letter in July from the FAA stating that the agency will be clarifying its policy regarding the letter of authorization (LOA) A003 for 14 CFR Part 137 operations to ensure that it is clear to regional FAA staff that 14 CFR Part 137 operations are not required to comply with operations specifications (OpSpecs). After the terrorist attacks on our nation using domestic airline aircraft on Sept. 11, 2001, the federal government required the FAA to develop and maintain a database of agricultural aviation operations and ag aircraft. The FAA decided to use an existing database already in use for other types of operations that required operations specifications (OpSpecs); the form it decided to use to record the aircraft information is LOA A003.

Over the years, this has created a great deal of confusion, as many FAA inspectors then concluded that agricultural operations require OpSpecs, **which they do not**. This has frequently led to FAA inspectors informing Part 137 operators that the FAA must inspect an ag aircraft before it can be added to an LOA A003. For a full description of the issue, please read this [article from the Winter 2020 issue of Agricultural Aviation](#).

The FAA's recent letter indicates that it will be revising its current inspector guidance to instruct inspectors to add an ag aircraft to an LOA A003 upon request from the operator, without delay. A copy of the FAA's July 20 letter can be found [here](#). NAAA recommends you download and keep a copy of this letter should your inspector request an inspection of an aircraft before adding it to your A003.

NAAA Continues Efforts to Keep Organophosphate, Diuron and Fluometuron Pesticides Available for Ag Aviation Industry

Last month NAAA submitted comments to the EPA on proposed interim decisions (PID) for two pesticides: diuron and fluometuron. A PID is the second step in the pesticide registration review process, preceded by risk assessments and followed by the final interim decision and then an endangered species review.

The PID for fluometuron retained aerial application on the label and included drift mitigation language acceptable to the aerial application industry. It allows aerial applications in winds up to 15 mph, requiring a boom shortened to 65% of wingspan or 75% of rotor diameter for helicopters, as well as an increase from ½ to ¾ swath displacement when wind speeds are above 10 mph. A medium or larger droplet spectrum is required, and applications during inversions are prohibited. These proposed drift mitigations have been seen on many PIDs over the last several years. NAAA commented to the EPA that we agreed with the proposed drift mitigations.

The PID for diuron proposed to ban all conventional uses of the product except for cotton defoliation. Aerial application of diuron for cotton defoliation was retained. NAAA's comments to the EPA opposed this ban and suggested that all uses be retained and aerial application be allowed for all uses. The proposed drift mitigations for aerial application of diuron restricted aerial applications to occur at wind speeds of 10 mph or less. NAAA opposed this restriction, citing the numerous existing product labels and PIDs that have allowed aerial applications in wind speeds up to 15 mph. NAAA proposed a 15-mph wind speed limit instead, with mitigations as set forth by the EPA in the PID for fluometuron and many other PIDs.

NAAA will also be fighting a petition submitted to the EPA by a dozen environmental groups to ban all remaining organophosphate insecticides, including malathion and chlorpyrifos. While all food and feed tolerances of chlorpyrifos have already been canceled, it is still going through the registration review process for forestry and mosquito applications. This week NAAA joined a coalition of other agricultural interest groups that requested from the EPA an extension of the comment period on this petition for 90 days. NAAA will be preparing its own comments in response to the environmentalists' petition in order to protect aerial applications of organophosphates, which are directly attacked in the petition.

Ag Aviation Expo Booth Sales Opened with Success

2022 Ag Aviation Expo booth sales opened July 14 with a lot of interest in the NAAA annual convention in Knoxville Dec. 5-8. One hundred and ten (110) companies purchased exhibit space on the first day of booth sales (and large booths sold in advance). That is

compared to 101 companies in 2021 and 85 companies in 2020 in Savannah on the opening day of booth sales. We are grateful for NAAA member companies that exhibit each year!

Take a peek at the [floor plan](#) to view the companies that will be represented in Knoxville. Many additional companies will purchase booth space between now and the start of the Ag Aviation Expo; check back often as the list of exhibitors increases.

Potential exhibitors—there is still plenty of space for you! Visit our [exhibitor webpage](#) for more details. Review directions on the new booth sales system [here](#).

Attendee registration is now open! [Register today for the Ag Aviation Expo!](#)

Details for the 2022 Ag Aviation Expo

- **Dates:** Dec. 5-8, 2022
- **Location:** Knoxville Convention Center
- **Kickoff Breakfast Speaker:** [Captain Scott Kelly](#), first astronaut to complete a year-in-space mission.
- **General Session Speakers:** [Dr. Stan Musick & Michelle Miller](#)
- **Schedule of Events:** See the current, tentative schedule [here](#).
- **Hotel:** Details [here](#).
- **Attendee Registration:** Now open!
- **Exhibitor Booth Sales Information**
- **Sponsorship Opportunities:** Sponsorships are now available. View the [opportunities here](#). Please [email Lindsay](#) if you would like to secure a sponsorship from last year or would like to be contacted about 2022 opportunities! We have sponsorships available for all budget sizes.
- **Auction Donations:** [Thank you to Pratt & Whitney Canada for donating a PT6-34AG to this year's NAAA Live Auction.](#) While we are still several months away from the Ag Aviation Expo, we are already accepting donations for the [Live and Silent Auction](#). The earlier you inform us of your auction donation, the more advertising you will receive on the NAAA website and in NAAA publications. Support the aerial application industry by donating an item today. [Email Lindsay](#) with your donation details.

NAAA Releases Book of the Century! Buy It Today

NAAA has released the book of the century—a century of agricultural aviation, that is.

One hundred years ago, an aerial crop dusting experiment spawned the birth of the agricultural aviation industry. To commemorate agricultural aviation's 100th anniversary, NAAA is pleased to present [Agriculture's Air Force: 100 Years of Aerial Application](#).

Agriculture's Air Force provides a new, updated account of aerial application's history, 35 years after Mabry Anderson's masterpiece, *Low & Slow: An Insider's History of Agricultural Aviation*, was published. NAAA's meticulously sourced book is based on a collective history of the agricultural aviation industry based on material from *Agricultural Aviation* magazine, *AgAir Update*, *Low & Slow* and other resources.

Beginning with [Agricultural Aviation's Spring 2021 issue](#), NAAA published excerpts from *Agriculture's Air Force* and continued to do so through the [Fall 2021 issue](#). Those stories are just a small slice of what's in the 268-page hardback edition, however. The complete book contains so much more.

Agriculture's Air Force delves into the intersection of agriculture and aviation. It chronicles the agricultural aviation industry's growth from its infancy in 1921 through the boom times after World War II and on to today's modern era of high-tech aerial application.

The finished hardback book has been years in the making but well worth the effort. "This is a significant piece of work covering not just the industry's history, but its essence," NAAA CEO Andrew Moore said. "We are proud of it and believe it will make a lasting contribution to the industry."

The story of agricultural aviation is much like the broader story of aviation: It is mostly punctuated with interesting smaller moments sandwiched between milestone developments. Aerial application is also the story of technological leaps and bounds.

Agriculture's Air Force covers five eras spanning more than 10 decades. In addition, it features 34 Spotlight pieces focused on significant individuals, organizations, trends, technologies and topics related to aerial application.

Agriculture's Air Force: 100 Years of Aerial Application may well be NAAA's most enduring 100th anniversary initiative. One thing's for sure: It is no textbook. The commemorative book is written from a fresh perspective that is entertaining and enlightening. Readers will come away with a new appreciation for agricultural aviation as a profession and the dedicated individuals who propel it forward.

Order Your Copy of Agriculture's Air Force Today!

Agriculture's Air Force retails for \$45, excluding shipping. Order it from [AgAir Update's Online Store](#).