



# The San Diego Flyer



## Prez Sez . . .

Glenn Frehafer



The latest development to happen with our PPG members - the loss of flying privilege from Nichols - was quite the blow to the club leadership and all of the S.D.U.A. membership, not just the PPG guys, and it demonstrates graphically the tenuous situation that we are in as a club.

Like it or not, we are in a symbiotic relationship with the Nichols Field concession and we must respect that, but now is the time to begin to solidify our existence and establish our right to be here not only in our own eyes, (we already know that) but also in the minds of the people in power that we are involved with all around us. This includes those in the public arena, those in the city, those at fish and game, those in the water department, developers, and concessionaires. Just as we did with ICE a couple of years back, we need to establish a dialog and show our worthiness and be proactive.

We offer a lot to the economy, to tourism, to recreation, to research and development of technology, and to education, by making available an affordable means for people to enjoy learning to fly. We have technical expertise. There are several people here that are or have been engineers as their vocations. I know of at least two A & P mechanics, we have a CFI, and ultralight trainers, PPG trainers, airline pilots, business men, etc. etc.

There really is nothing light weight about us. In San Diego we are the only game in town when it comes to ultralight sport flying, but not many have a clue about who we are or what we do. Much to my dismay I found out that even Bram, our closest ally, couldn't think of anything to tell the City visitors about us when giving a tour of Nichols Field and when asked by them what it was that the S.D.U.A. contributed to San Diego. So, what can we do?

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## SDUA Meeting Minutes

March 3, 2018

10:03AM - Call to order

Paramotor Activities suspended indefinitely at Nichols. Kiting is still OK.

If Paramotor Pilots want their 2018 SDUA membership dues refunded, contact Mike Sandlin and a check will be sent to you with your refund.

Send stuff to Andy Boyer if you want anything in the newsletter. Stuff for sale, stories, photos.  
[andyboyer@gmail.com](mailto:andyboyer@gmail.com)

Pat Moran spoke about claims against Paramotor pilots, and Skydive San Diego's reaction to shut them down to protect their lease negotiations.

Larry talked about getting a sublease when Skydive renews their lease with the city. SDUA isn't actually on the lease, so currently we have no rights basically. What do subleases look like for other airports with FBO's, and how does SDUA get on the lease? We need to fight for our right to be on the lease and have a place to fly. Larry says Bram likes us and wants us to remain at the airport.

Keep your hangars and outside areas tidy, SDUA needs to have its best face on for the lease renewal process, so please make sure you aren't leaving garbage or junk outside your hangar. Thanks to Miguel for cleaning the clubhouse, vacuuming and cleaning windows. Our club needs a new technical adviser since Kevin moved to Utah and is out indefinitely.

Dale Finch gave a presentation on his weight-shift ultralight course. He teaches at Ocotillo Wells airport. His website is  
[www.sandiegoultralights.com](http://www.sandiegoultralights.com)

11:43AM - Meeting adjourned

## The Eyes of a Pilot

Paramotors Shut Down- What Happened?

By Pat Moran

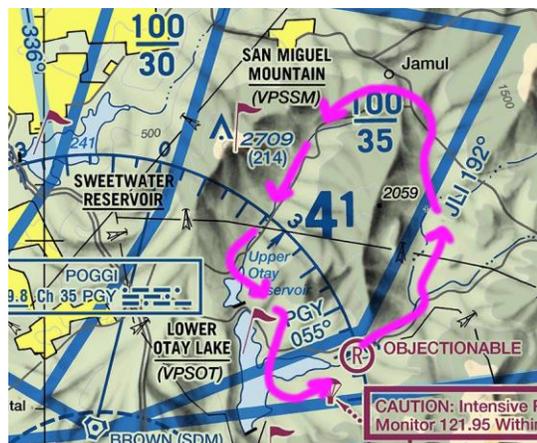
Hello Fellow Pilots -

By now you've probably heard about the paramotors being suspended at our Little Slice of Heaven Airport (Nichols), and as one of the more active paramotor pilots at our club I wanted to share the story behind why this happened. You might think that because paramotors have been banned, surely there was something egregious, outrageous, or unlawful that warranted this decision, but surprisingly this is not the case.

The decision to ban paramotors was based on activity that was completely reasonable, legal, and common among ultralight pilots.

As anyone who flies ultralights knows, especially paramotors, much of the joy and excitement of these machines is flying "low and slow". Almost every person or business that promotes paramotors will tout this unparalleled freedom to fly "low and slow". But WHERE is it okay to fly low and slow? FAR 103 says we cannot fly over congested areas and doesn't elaborate on specific altitudes. So, in terms of FAR's we can fly as low as we want ANYWHERE that isn't a congested area or creating a hazard to people or property on the ground. Even FAR 91.119 states that minimum altitudes that apply to certificated aircraft DO NOT apply to paramotors.

So, with this information, does that mean it is reasonable/prudent to fly low anywhere we want within the FARs? Probably not. Then where is it prudent to fly low? I would say over unpopulated areas, and there is plenty of that near Nichols if you go to the East, and even some to the North. By looking at the San Diego Terminal Area Chart you can see the surrounding area of Nichols is uncongested and mostly unpopulated. The chart also shows that there are no "Wilderness Areas", such as out near Barrett Lake, which request pilots to fly above 2000 ft AGL. Also, by looking at satellite images for the surrounding areas such as Proctor Valley, and east of the Jamul Mountains, you'll see that there are no houses, so this area is definitely unpopulated.



So, with this information does it seem reasonable and legal to fly low out in these wide-open / unpopulated areas? I would say Yes. What other possible indicators would we as pilots have not to fly low in these areas, after doing our due diligence of checking FAA charts and looking at satellite images?

Well, just as a minority of residents who live near an airport will call and complain about airplane noise, there are people near these unpopulated areas that complain about low-flying paramotors. The complaints centered around disruption of wildlife such as nesting raptors, and even cattle. When we have seen cattle, we turn and fly away from them, and the same with birds. We are absolutely not interested in harassing animals. Who would deliberately do such a thing?

## The Eyes of a Pilot



To the best of my understanding, these complaints were directed to the Department of Fish and Game, who directed the complaints to the City, who directed the complaints to Skydive San Diego. You are probably aware that Skydive San Diego only has 2 years left on its lease at the Nichols airport, and I believe that lease negotiations are currently underway. And this is where the dilemma emerges.

To quickly squash the threat that paramotors could create in the lease negotiations, Skydive San Diego decided to stop paramotor operations. Permanently.

I certainly understand the reason for Skydive San Diego wanting to thwart any threat to their lease negotiations. Without Skydive San Diego, SDUA does not exist at Nichols. SDUA, Ultralights and Paramotors offer very little (if any) benefit to Skydive San Diego. Having us at Nichols only creates liability, and we understand that. The problem is that SDUA does not have any rights in the current lease with the city, and we operate at the mercy of Skydive San Diego, and this is something we can hopefully resolve in the future if a new lease is obtained.

Certainly, if we Paramotor Pilots had known that there were sensitive areas where birds were nesting or cattle were grazing, we never would have flown over or near those areas. But how could we possibly know this information, as it's not depicted on FAA Charts, nor was it part of "local pilot knowledge" that would be shared amongst our small community of SDUA pilots?

I spoke with a woman at the Department of Fish & Game on 2/19 who said she would email me a map of "Sensitive Wildlife" areas near Nichols (after the complaint had already escalated to Skydive San Diego). But nearly one month later I still haven't received the map from her, so unfortunately, I can't pass that knowledge along to you. I can say that the areas that which you should avoid flying low, although legal, reasonable and unpopulated, are Proctor Valley, anywhere near Otay Lake, and in the valley north of Pio Pico Campground.

Since I joined SDUA and started flying paramotors one year ago, I knew that Nichols was a very special place, and I have been grateful for every flight I had. Nichols is a Gem. With wonderful fun people and a perfect place to fly. I figured our days were limited, because it seemed too good to be true. I just never expected it to end like this, and without any warning.

In conclusion, I hope this information illustrates how fragile of a position our club is in: At the mercy of Skydive San Diego, unfortunately but understandably making major decisions without seeking our perspective. I also caution fellow pilots that just because an area might be unpopulated and legal to fly over, you never know who will complain, and what consequences the complaint might have given we have no contractual rights at Nichols.

Pat Moran  
SDUA Secretary

*(Pat Moran has been flying Paramotors for one year, and began flying airplanes in 1999. He has worked as an airline pilot since 2005.)*

*Prez Says continued.....*

Your Search Committee met with our Field Manager. After hearing a presentation and having an in depth discussion we decided to form a new group to gather together our resources which validate our history and establish a body of irrefutable proof of the S.D.U.A.'s right to exist right where we are, so that we will be prepared when the opportunity arises for us to defend our position.

We have asked several talented people from the membership to join this new group called Save San Diego 2020. I will be chairman of both of these committees. When we have received replies from all who have been asked to volunteer we will announce their names to everyone.

Please be praying for our club, its leadership, and all those that work so hard to contribute to benefit us all. Include that God would bless us, establish us, and use us according to his will.

Best Regards,  
Glenn

Flying Websites of Interest

- [www.faa.gov](http://www.faa.gov) Federal Aviation Administration
- [www.faasafety.gov](http://www.faasafety.gov) FAA Safety Courses
- [www.psao.grc.nasa.gov/asao.faa.ftml](http://www.psao.grc.nasa.gov/asao.faa.ftml) Regulations
- [www.sportys.com](http://www.sportys.com) Airplane Stuff
- [www.aircraftspruce.com](http://www.aircraftspruce.com) Airplane Stuff
- [www.leadingedgeairfoils.com](http://www.leadingedgeairfoils.com) Airplane Stuff
- [www.eaa.org](http://www.eaa.org) Experimental Aircraft Association
- [www.sportpilot.org](http://www.sportpilot.org) Website for Sport Pilots
- [www.aopa.org](http://www.aopa.org) Aircraft Owners & Pilots Assn.
- [www.usppa.org](http://www.usppa.org) Powered Paragliding Organization

**Classified**

*This space is available for anyone who would like to list things for sale, things they'd like to give away, or things that they'd want others to sell or give them. Just submit to the Newsletter Editor!*

**The Eyes of a Pilot**

*We'd love the opportunity to publish your flying stories, interesting events and happenings here for all to enjoy. Just write something up, submit to the Newsletter Editor, and then sit back and enjoy the attention!*

**Reminders**

- *Membership dues for 2018 are overdue. Please submit to Mike Sandlin ASAP.*
- *April club meeting is on April 7<sup>th</sup> at 10:00AM in the Nichols Field clubhouse.*