I’m disappointed to see the amount of concern over holding the Applegate Open in 2022. I’d be happy as treasurer of the club and as admin for the event to not have to do all the work associated with the event, but I believe it is something the club needs to do.

It’s part of promoting the sport and supporting the community. Isn’t that our charter as a 501 3c non-profit organization? We were one of two events that determined the national champion. Twenty some pilots were trained every year we have had the event. The 2021 event brought in $5,000 in pilot donations that was donated to the Ruch School. We got good press in the Applegater Newspaper for the event and for that donation. The event also brings lots of money into the community that would otherwise not happen. Lodging, groceries, camping fees, dining out all would suffer without the event.

In the three years that we have held the event the club has made a profit of $39,814. We made $16,133 in 2018, $17,516 in 2019, and $6,165 in 2021. That is just from direct entry fees and memberships for the competitors. Volunteer and spectator club memberships are not included in these numbers but are significant. Attendance was down in 2021 and we had extra COVID expense along with wind damage to canopies. I outlined those reasons in a separate email. We can adjust for fewer pilots in 2022 and we will have our revenue back up.

Here’s a bit of history. 2017 was the last year of the Rat Race. After an investigation in 2017 by Rich Stewart, Paul Murdoch and me we decided to proceed with the creating the event. The two main drivers for that were at the time it looked like we might be the ONLY sanctioned comp in the U.S., and we could use the profits to build our Landing zone Acquisition fund. That fund is now sitting at $151,000 thanks in large part to the event. Profits also helped us with project for weather stations and numerous cameras, the Hunter powerline project, and building a storage shed at LongSword.

Subsequently Matt Senior took on the Chelan event, so the original argument is not quite as strong. But the likely scenario if we go forward with the event will be three events to determine the national championship. Applegate, Chelan, and King Mt. Pilots turn in their best two point totals for the national championship.

We have a plan for 2022 to adjust our start dates to give pilots a chance to attend the Chelan Open. That should give us a boost in attendance for pilots who want to compete in all three comps. We will still compete directly with the Chelan Ozone comp. But I’m guessing we will still get a lot of recreational comp pilots who would rather fly Woodrat than Chelan.

One suggestions was that we could make the same amount of money on a fly-in. I can’t envision a fly-in event making as much money. The last Star Thistle made no money at all excluding incremental membership fees. But most of the pilots who attended were already club members from previous visits during the year.

A training event might be a possibility. SuperClinic on steroids? Multiple clinics in one week. Clinics take more work than a comp when you consider transportation and multiple trips up the hill. Would need a lot more pilot registrations and we would have to raise the registration fees.

As far as LongSword is concerned, I don’t think they are all that upset with us relative to the event. They only had one incident where someone drove their motorcycle out into the field. Their decision not to host was a business decision on what money they could make relative to the disruption of having all that traffic around Matt’s animals and his trailer. You can pretty much count on them doing plays every year from now on given the success in 2021. Far as I know they were happy to have pilots land there and sell tickets for people to come and watch on the two Saturdays of the event. And Wells Land turned out to be a great venue. Phil Marion was happy with the pilots parking on his property and getting some money for it. The issues we have at LongSword are primarily related to the incident with the hang glider pilots being overserved and obnoxious. That led to the current rules.

For 2021 being a first year I think things went great at Wells Land. Pilots loved the place. Garon was a great bartender and host. There are a few adjustments to make in 2022 relative to the site plan, HQ, and scoring but I think it’s an improvement over LongSword. The amphitheater was great for the awards ceremony.

As far as I can remember we have had no significant landowner incidents of note during the event. Pilot briefings and mandatory review materials help keep pilots from landing where they shouldn’t. I can only think of a couple issues this year. One was with a landowner with a known no-land having a pilot land in an adjacent field. He verbally harassed the pilot. The pilot reported the incident and that was that. There was another motorcycle yahoo who gave one of our volunteers a hard time for parking near the 100 acre LZ but when she told him we had Staver’s permission he drove off placated.

I’m afraid is we skip 2022 we will probably not have any future events. We have Terri and Bon Stewart agreeing to take on the event going forward and Mary Beth and I will be around to help them in 2022.

So for the board members, If you are thinking of voting not to sponsor the event in 2022 I hope you will seriously consider changing your vote. I’m looking for a good discussion of this at the Board meeting on Tuesday.

Cheers,

Dan