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## District I

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont



The AMA “Hill Day,” June 25, 2019, afforded AMA’s Government Affairs team and Executive-Council (EC) members an opportunity to engage in a morning of roundtable discussions with key UAS stakeholders and an afternoon of meetings with congressional legislators and senior staff.

The day began in a meeting room in the hotel at 8 a.m. with a 30-minute strategy discussion among the EC members, staff, and AMA’s two lobbyists. We discussed questions and concerns that we might want to deliberate with the invited guest speakers and later with legislators and senior staffers.

Most concerning was the FAA notice published in the Federal Register on May 17, which limited altitude to 400 feet above ground level for all UAS operations in uncontrolled airspace and exclusion from controlled airspace. This initial implementation of one of the statutory conditions, without the FAA promised waivers and exceptions for AMA members, created considerable confusion among clubs and members, with some ceasing flight operations for particular types of model aircraft.

Executive Director of the FAA UAS Integration Office Jay Merkle was the first speaker. He outlined the initial priorities for UAS recreational operations under the statutory exception and what order of implementation of statutes we might expect during the integration process.

He expressed a genuine willingness to continue working closely with AMA in providing the best guidance to AMA members and clubs on what to do as each of the statutory conditions were implemented. He assured us that while letters of agreement for UAS operations between clubs and Air Traffic Control or flying site owners are being acquired, that AMA members could continue to fly as they have been in accordance

with AMA’s safety programming.

We learned that FAA’s low altitude authorization and notification capability system (LAANC) will be available for recreational pilots to fly in controlled airspace on July 23, 2019. Later in the year, the FAA will implement the recreational remote pilot aeronautical knowledge and safety test before approving AMA’s community-based organization status. He told us that that considerations for requiring remote ID capability in UAS would be going through FAA’s defense and security partners and that there would be a carve-out for recreational modeler-approved operations.

Senior Director of Government Affairs for the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) Rune Duke spoke next. He shared AOPA’s (and AMA’s) concerns that the May 17 law changes should have been delayed until other related statutory conditions had been implemented.

Making a considerable change in policy for recreational UAS operations effective the same day that it’s published prevents preparing and educating the membership on the changes. Rune also shared that AOPA offers a “You Can Fly” education program and would like to work more closely with AMA on such initiatives.

The last speaker was the Executive Director of Alliance for Drone Innovation Jenny Rosenberg. She pointed out that other government agencies, such as the Department of Defense (DOD) and the National Security Agency NSA, are now looming large over the FAA. A safe integration policy for UAS operations might be impacted to satisfy the DOD’s more important UAS security and privacy concerns.

After lunch, we separated into two groups and each of us had an opportunity to speak with congressional legislators from our home states or their policy staffers to share concerns about the future aeromodeling and how it might be dramatically affected by implementing provisions for recreational operation of UAS and model aircraft.

We not only wanted to seek Congressional support for sensible, nonoverbearing UAS operational requirements for hobbyists, but also offer to help our senators, representatives, and the FAA ensure that public safety, security, and privacy concerns with respect to UAS operations were being addressed in the best possible way.

The day was productive and I am sure AMA will receive additional support from Congress as a result of the great dialogue and guidance from AMA’s Executive Director Chad Budreau and lobbyist James Reid. 