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September 2, 2009

Mr. Anthony Garcia
Airport Compliance Specialist
Federal Aviation Administration
Western-Pacific Region Airports Division
15000 Aviation Boulevard, Room 3024
Lawndale, CA 90261

Dear Mr. Garcia:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) represents the general aviation interests of 414,000 members, more than two-thirds of the nation's pilots – including 49,000 of our members in the state of California. On behalf of our membership, AOPA is committed to ensuring the future viability and development of general aviation airports and their facilities as part of a national transportation system.

We understand that recent decisions made by the management at Hemet-Ryan Airport (HMT) may displace glider operations at the airport. Accordingly, we request that your office review the situation and act to ensure compliance with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) guidance as to the continuance of non-motorized glider operations at the airport.

We are concerned that due to the departure of the glider fixed base operator (FBO), gliders may not be adequately accommodated at HMT. AOPA believes that airport sponsors have an obligation to operate an airport safely for all users, and requests that, in light of the August 18, 2009 letter from the Riverside County Economic Development Agency, your office review their decision to “not consider continuation of unpowered glider operations that depart from the Hemet-Ryan Airport.” We do not believe that the airport has adequately explained why such a decision is necessary. Additionally, we suggest that the Orange County Soaring Association's letter of August 24, 2009 indicates a willingness on their part to work towards resolving the issues of glider operations at HMT.

Per FAA guidance in the Airport Compliance Handbook, Order 5190.6A, we request that your office make a determination as to the reasonableness of the sponsor's restrictions on glider operations. Further, we recommend that a collaborative effort be made by all parties concerned to come together to address these issues and come to an equitable arrangement.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to a just resolution that is in the interests of the entire aviation community.

Sincerely,

John L. Collins
Manager
Airport Policy