

Great Alaska Aviation Gathering 2025

Program Schedule (CAO 18 Apr 25)

Seminars hosted by the **Alaskan Aviation Safety Foundation**

Saturday, May 3rd

<i>Time</i>	<i>Hoskins Exhibits Hall</i>
10:00 – 10:50	<p>Learn to Fly - What You Need to Know to Get Started <i>Wella Jay, Land and Sea Aviation</i> <i>Aras Sirvelis, Alaska Airmen's Association</i> <i>Marcel Dionne, MD, FAA Alaska Regional Flight Surgeon</i></p> <p>This panel of aviation experts will present federal regulatory and medical requirements for those interested in learning to fly, provide information on scholarship options to help students get started flying for fun or career, and offer advice based on their observations and personal experiences.</p>
11:00 – 11:50	<p>The Alaskan Aviation Insurance Market <i>Jennifer Moninski, Alaska Program Manager, BWI Aviation Insurance</i></p> <p>BWI is a local Alaska aviation insurance agency located at the Lake Hood Airport in Anchorage, and partners with the Alaska Airmen's Association. Ms. Moninski's presentation will focus on the Alaska aviation insurance market and the new coverage options available for pilots and CFIs. The presentation will also provide an opportunity for feedback from insured pilots and an opportunity for a Q&A.</p>
12:00-12:50	<p>Top Advocacy Issues Facing Alaska <i>Adam White, Government Affairs Advocate, Alaska Airmen's Association</i> <i>Jim McClay, Director, Airspace, Air Traffic, and Security, Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association</i></p> <p>Adam and Jim will brief on the Anchorage Terminal Area Airspace and Procedures Study and the major changes planned for the Anchorage Class C airspace, progress on the replacement of 100LL, and other hot topics that affect General Aviation in Alaska. Qualifies for WINGS credit</p>
13:00 – 13:50	<p>AOPA Pilot Town Hall <i>Darren Pleasance, President, Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association</i></p> <p>AOPA will provide an update on current trends and issues facing general aviation in Alaska and across the country, including AOPA's ongoing search for an unleaded fuel for all, affordable insurance, and support for aviation infrastructure in Alaska. Qualifies for WINGS credit</p>

Saturday May 3rd 14:00 – 14:20	NWS Alaska Aviation Weather Websites for Pilots and Non-pilots <i>David Kochevar, Warning Coordination Meteorologist, National Weather Service Alaska Aviation Weather Unit and Anchorage Volcanic Ash Advisory Center</i> <i>Prince Dalal, Meteorologist, National Weather Service Alaska Aviation Weather Unit and Anchorage Volcanic Ash Advisory Center</i> Over the last few years, the National Weather Service has created a number of new or upgraded aviation weather websites which are approved for use in Alaska. This briefing will include a summary of these new tools you might not yet be aware of, and instruction on their use from Alaska Aviation Weather Unit Meteorologists. Qualifies for WINGS credit
14:30 – 15:50	Surviving the Unexpected - The Human Factors of a Midair Collision <i>Amy L. Hoover, PhD, CFII, AGI, Professor, Central Washington University</i> Amy Hoover shares her personal story of surviving a mid-air collision over a remote mountainous area. She discusses how attitude, training, and practice helped her make critical decisions, manage risk, land successfully, and facilitate her own rescue. Hoover relates the events to her own research and experience as well as practices taken from civilian and military training programs. She shares strategies to help pilots and other survivors navigate the aftermath of traumatic events, including personal practices related to physical and mental well-being, self-care, and more. Qualifies for WINGS credit



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Sunday, May 4th

<i>Time</i>	<i>Hoskins Exhibits Hall</i>
08:00 – 11:00	<p>AOPA Rusty Pilots Seminar Yasmina Platt-Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association Rusty Pilot Program</p> <p>If you've taken a break from flying and want to learn how to get refreshed to be a safe and legal pilot once again, this is the course for you.</p> <p>Follow this link for all details and to complete the required registration for this seminar: https://webforms.aopa.org/event/aopa-rusty-pilots-seminar-at-the-great-alaska-aviation-gathering/e664007</p> <p>**There is a fee for non-AOPA members</p> <p>Qualifies for WINGS credit</p>
11:00-11:50	<p>ForeFlight Workshop – Pro Tips for Flight Planning <i>Captain Brian Schiff, The Proficient Pilot</i></p> <p>Learn to master ForeFlight in this interactive workshop on the utilization of ForeFlight, the aviation industry's most renowned and widely used electronic flight bag (EFB) and flight planning application, presented by Brian Schiff. It will offer comprehensive hands-on training using ForeFlight for flight planning, weather, and in-flight navigation. The pace will ensure that you thoroughly understand ForeFlight's functionality without feeling overwhelmed. Pose questions and contribute your own tips and tricks. The workshop will enrich your understanding of ForeFlight and how to make it work best for you.</p> <p>Qualifies for WINGS credit</p>
12:00-12:50	<p>Building Your Own Airplane - From Blueprint to Flight <i>Bernie Willis, John Davis, and Rick Henry, Experimental Aircraft Association</i></p> <p>If you have considered building an airplane, this session is a must! These engaging aircraft builders will share the pros and cons of building an aircraft, basic regulations covering experimental and homebuilt aircraft, safety considerations, and how to get started. Whether you're an enthusiast or a professional, thinking about building, or already on the journey, join the conversation to explore the art and science behind building an airplane.</p> <p>Qualifies for WINGS credit</p>

Sunday May 4th 13:00 – 13:50	Float Safety Panel <i>National Transportation Safety Board, Millicent Hill</i> <i>Steve McCaughey, Seaplane Pilots Association</i> <i>David Swartz, PhD, Retired Federal Aviation Administration</i> Join us for a panel presentation about seaplane safety with a discussion of recent accident and inspection findings, trends and concerns with aging aircraft and components, and suggested best practices for maintaining floats. Qualifies for AMT credit
14:00 – 14:50	People and Passion - The RAF Way <i>Kari DeFreest, Recreational Aviation Foundation</i> Familiar with the trademark orange shirts of The RAF but wonder what all the excitement is about? Looking for opportunities to give back in aviation? Either way, this presentation is for you! Join Kari to learn about the people and passions driving the RAF into 2025 and beyond.
15:00 – 15:50	The Round-the-World Flight to End Polio <i>John Ockenfels and Peter Teahen, Rotary Club</i> Two pilots, both Rotary Club members, took three months to circumnavigate the globe in a Cessna 210 airplane. They raised over one million dollars to help eradicate polio, and participated in another 24 fundraisers during their trip. Hear them tell their stories about planning, flying, and surviving this amazing adventure.



Speaker Bios and Photos

Prince Dalal, *National Weather Service Alaska Aviation Weather Unit and Anchorage Volcanic Ash Advisory Center*

Prince is a Meteorologist at the Alaska Aviation Weather Unit and Anchorage Volcanic Ash Advisory Center. I moved to Alaska in Summer 2024 and have enjoyed my time here so far. I enjoy playing sports and staying outdoors as much as I can. I look forward to meeting and learning from aviation professionals during the gathering.



Prince Dalal

John Davis, *Experimental Aircraft Association*

John Davis is an A&P, IA and Australian LAME who has built and flown 3 Vans RV type aircraft and is currently completing another. He was a long term Alaskan resident employed as a 747 Flight Engineer by Japan Airlines prior to moving to Arizona. He has worked as a DAR certifying Experiment Amateur Built type aircraft and as an FAA Maintenance Inspector at the Anchorage FSDO. He is an EAA Life Member and volunteers each year as an Experimental Amateur Built Judge at Oshkosh Airventure in Wisconsin.



John Davis

Kari DeFreest, *Recreational Aviation Foundation*

Kari DeFreest lives in Ketchikan, Alaska. Kari has enjoyed flying over the years when an opportunity presented itself. She also enjoys spending time outdoors camping, hiking, and kayaking. Her enjoyment of both aviation and the great outdoors merged in an unexpected way when she met and married her husband, Jeff, a pilot. Together they own a Cessna 180H on straight floats that frequently takes them on wilderness adventures along with their canine sidekick, Magneto. On these adventures, Kari serves as navigator and ramp rat while Jeff is the pilot in command. As an Ambassador for the Recreational Aviation Foundation (the RAF), Kari advocates to preserve and protect backcountry aviation access to airstrips and remote lake cabins. These, and other resources, provide opportunities for dispersed recreation and also serve as a safety net for the aviation community across Alaska. And, if you are lucky, you just might get to enjoy a home-cooked meal with other RAF volunteers on a project where Kari is the camp manager!



Kari DeFreest

Marcell Dionne, MD, *Federal Aviation Administration*

Dr. Dionne has served as Alaska's FAA Regional Flight Surgeon since January 2015. He is certified by the American Board of Preventive Medicine in Aerospace Medicine and Occupational Medicine, and has over 30 years of experience in aerospace medicine. Prior to joining the FAA, Dr. Dionne was the Director of Medical Services at Fairweather, LLC in Anchorage, and an occupational medicine consultant for companies operating in the natural resources industry in Alaska.

Dr. Dionne graduated from the University of Maine with a BA in Chemistry, and from Tufts University with a Doctorate in Medicine. He completed a residency in Family Medicine and was in practice as a family physician and Aviation Medical Examiner until he was commissioned in the U. S. Air Force and received his flight surgeon rating. He is a licensed private pilot and has logged over 800 hours in a variety of USAF aircraft. Dr. Dionne retired from the Air Force as Chief Flight Surgeon in the rank of Colonel after 21 years of active military service, and moved to Palmer, Alaska with his family in 2013.



Marcel Dionne, MD

David Kochevar, *National Weather Service Alaska Aviation Weather Unit and Anchorage Volcanic Ash Advisory Center*

David Kochevar is the Warning Coordination Meteorologist at the Alaska Aviation Weather Unit (AAWU) and Anchorage Volcanic Ash Advisory Center. David has spent his entire career in Alaska with the NWS, and has over 15 years of Alaska aviation weather experience from Anchorage Center, the Anchorage Weather Forecast Office, and as the Alaska Regional Aviation Meteorologist.



David Kochevar

Rick Henry, *Experimental Aircraft Association*

Rick built a Bushby Mustang II amateur-built experimental airplane and has flown it 1,100 hours since 1998. It has flown to 49 US states, including six trips from Memphis, TN to Alaska, to eight Canadian provinces and to the Bahamas a few times.

Rick is a 23,400 hour pilot, Young Eagles volunteer, retired FedEx MD-11 captain, A&P Mechanic with Inspection Authorization, 50-year Gold Seal Certificated Flight Instructor and former Master CFI.

Rick's website about building his Mustang II is at:
<http://experimentalairplane.com>.



Rick Henry

Amy L. Hoover, PhD, Central Washington University

Dr. Amy Hoover is the 2022 National Flight Instructor of the year. She has been flying commercially and teaching backcountry flying for 35 years. Hoover holds a Ph.D. in Education and is a Professor of Aviation at Central Washington University. She has over 7,500 hours of flight time, approximately 2/3 of it as a charter pilot and backcountry instructor in central Idaho, and is the primary author of the ASA book Mountain, Canyon, and Backcountry Flying which has sold over 9,000 copies since publication in 2019. Hoover has given more than 250 presentations on a variety of topics throughout the U.S. and has authored more than 30 professional articles and manuals on aviation human factors, single pilot resource management, instructional



Amy Hoover

methodologies, canyon weather, and mountain/backcountry flying tips.

Steven McCaughey, Seaplane Pilots Association

Steve McCaughey has been the Executive Director of the Seaplane Pilots Association and the Seaplane Pilots Foundation since 2011, and comes from a highly diverse background in aviation. Known for his unquenchable thirst for everything related to flying - his aviation adventures have taken him everywhere from Alaska to Australia; and everywhere in between. Steve is currently the owner operator of an amphibious float equipped Piper Super Cub and a Cessna 120 taildragger. He has time in over 60 different types of seaplanes, holds a multi sea rating and an ultra rare type rating in the HU-16 Grumman Albatross.

He served with the US Air Force Special Operations Command working on electronic warfare systems on the amazing AC-130 Gunship, and has spent the majority of his time flying "Strangebirds" meaning tailwheel, seaplanes, aerobatic aircraft, warbirds and the like.

Since arriving at the Seaplane Pilots Association in 2011 he has been instrumental in creating a Seaplane Rating Scholarship program, has worked tirelessly advocating for the water flying community with organizations such as the Alaska Airmen's Association, AOPA, EAA and the Recreational Aviation Foundation to preserve and protect seaplane access across the country while conducting over 50 seaplane safety seminars and workshops each year.



Steven McCaughey

Jim McClay, Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association

Jim joined AOPA in August of 2020 and serves as Director, Regulatory Affairs, focusing on Airspace, Air Traffic, Security and Emerging Technology. Prior to joining AOPA, he spent over 13 years as part of NBAA's Air Traffic Services team at the FAA Air Traffic Control System Command Center. He also has experience as an airline dispatcher and as a scheduler for a Fortune 500 corporate flight department. He has a degree in Marketing from Liberty University and is an instrument-rated private pilot.



Jim McClay

Jennifer Moninski, BWI Aviation Insurance Agency, Inc.

Jennifer Moninski is BWI Aviation Insurance's Alaska Project Manager. She is a highly skilled aviation insurance risk manager located at the Lake Hood Airport in Anchorage, Alaska, year-round. With 16 years of experience in the insurance industry, Jennifer has a deep understanding of the complexities of aviation insurance and is dedicated to helping her clients mitigate risk and protect their assets. She is an expert at providing tailored insurance solutions to meet the unique needs of her clients and is highly regarded for her exceptional customer service and attention to detail. Her excellent connections within the insurance community allow her to grow the services and opportunities for pilots in Alaska.



Jennifer Moninski

John Ockenfels, Flying Rotarian

John has been piloting small aircraft for almost 50 years. Along with Peter Teahen, he is half owner of the 1977 Cessna T210 that together they flew around the world to raise funds to eradicate Polio. He also owns and maintains a WWII PT17 Stearman, and has been the proud owner of several WWII warbirds. John attended the University of Iowa before serving in the United States Air Force from 1972 to 1976. John, now retired, spent his career working with his brothers in their family business, City Carton Recycling, based in Iowa City, Iowa, where he served as President then CEO. He is a founding member of the Iowa City, Iowa A.M. Rotary Club, serving as President in 1998-99. He served as District Governor for Rotary District 6000 during the 2014 - 2015 Rotary year. In 2002, John traveled to India to take part in a National Polio Immunization Day event and the International Polio Eradication Summit, in Mumbai. He has served on many District, Zone, and International Rotary committees over many years. John is a member of the International Fellowship of Flying Rotarians and serves as the North Central Chair for the Americas Region. He is also an adjunct member of the E-Aviation worldwide Club. In 2021, John was recognized as 1 of 3 Rotarians, worldwide, to receive The Rotary Foundation's Service award for a Polio Free World. In 2023, John was recognized with Rotary's highest individual honor, The Service Above Self Award. John and his wife Deb have been active community and Rotary volunteers for many years.



John Ockenfels

Yasmina Platt, *Rusty Pilots Presenter, Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association*

Yasmina Platt knew she wanted to become a pilot since flying, as a child, in airliners between the beautiful Canary Islands and mainland Spain. She moved to the United States 20 years ago to achieve her dream. Obtaining her private pilot certificate while in High School, Ms. Platt is an active pilot and flight instructor, rated in single and multi-engine airplanes, seaplanes, and helicopters. Yasmina also holds a B.S. in Professional Aeronautics from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU) and a M.S. in Transportation Planning and Management from Texas Southern University (TSU). In addition to teaching Rusty Pilot seminars, Yasmina plans, designs, and develops aviation infrastructure and writes a bi-monthly column for the Midwest Flyer Magazine. She is based in Houston, Texas with her husband Jared, an airline pilot and GA supporter, although they can also be found often traveling the country in their motorhome.



Yasmina Platt

Darren Pleasance, *Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association*

Darren Pleasance is president and chief executive officer of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA)—the largest aviation community in the world representing hundreds of thousands of pilots. Pleasance has over 8,000 flight hours in more than 80 different types of aircraft ranging from simple trainers to business jets to vintage warbirds, including a P-51 Mustang. Early in his career he flew as a corporate pilot, working for celebrities such as John Travolta before going on to fly charters in the Alaskan bush. He left professional aviation to pursue a career in business, but he never stopped flying. Today he owns and operates a Piper Meridian, a Vans RV-6, and a SeaRey floatplane while maintaining currency as a certificated flight instructor.

Prior to joining AOPA on January 1, 2025, Pleasance led Cisco's Acceleration Center, an organization formed to accelerate the success of mission-critical aspects of Cisco's business transformation. Prior to Cisco, he led global customer acquisitions for Google and served as a partner in consulting firm McKinsey & Co.'s high tech sector and marketing and sales practice. Throughout his business career, Pleasance has remained active in aviation, serving for many years on the board of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA).



Darren Pleasance

<p>Pleasance holds a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering degree from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and an MBA from the UCLA Anderson School of Management.</p>	
<p>Captain Brian Schiff, <i>The Proficient Pilot</i></p> <p>Brian Schiff is a seasoned captain for a major US airline with a deep-seated passion for general aviation. Over his career, he has accumulated an impressive 21,000 hours of flight time across a wide range of aircraft and has flown over 100 different types.</p> <p>As an esteemed member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Flight Instructors (NAFI), Brian's expertise and experience have earned him the distinction of being an active 40-year Gold Seal flight instructor and FAA Safety Team Representative. Possessing multiple flight instructor ratings, he is known for his exceptional ability to simplify complex procedures and concepts while maintaining a contagious enthusiasm for aviation and teaching.</p> <p>Furthermore, Brian has been an FAA-designated examiner, allowing him to conduct examinations of pilots. He obtained his Bachelor of Science degree in Aeronautical Science from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and his Master of Science in Aviation Safety from the University of Central Missouri.</p> <p>Brian is a highly respected figure in the aviation community and is sought after for his engaging and informative seminars on aviation safety and techniques. He is passionate about educating students and professional pilots and is committed to upholding the highest standards of aviation instruction and promoting aviation safety.</p>	 <p>Brian Schiff</p>

David Swartz, (Retired) Federal Aviation Administration

Dr. Dave Swartz recently retired from the FAA and has been involved in aviation since he was very young, getting his first pilot license before his driver's license. Dave completed a BS in Aerospace Engineering at the University of Kansas and went on to work on a startup canard pusher turboprop called the OMAC, in research and development at Piper, followed by Boeing. He studied fatigue, fracture mechanics, and material science and completed masters and doctorate degrees at the University of Utah while teaching, running a consulting engineering business, and skiing.

After completing his PhD research, Dave started at the FAA working with the Lancair type certificate program, and became a Metallurgy and Composites Technical Specialist, developing policy, addressing manufacturing issues, and working with the composites team on various special projects including the Commercial Airplane Composite Repair Committee, the Lycoming Crankshaft Special Certification Review Team, the Space Shuttle Columbia accident investigation, and the American Airlines 587 accident. Dave returned to Alaska in 2003 as a Senior Engineer, and in 2021 he became a Continued Operational Safety Technical Advisor, overseeing general aviation issues for the FAA nationally. Dave is an active pilot and spends much of his time working in his hangar at the Birchwood airport. Dave has an abiding love of aviation and a passion for aviation safety worldwide.



David Swartz

Peter Teahen, *Flying Rotarian*

Peter is an experienced pilot and has been piloting small aircraft for over 51 years. He is a member of the Cedar Rapids West Rotary Club and of the International Fellowship of Flying Rotarians. Peter is a Funeral Director and President of Teahen Funeral Home in Cedar Rapids. He is an author, mental health professional, firefighter and EMT, and serves on the faculty of the University of Iowa. Peter is the founder of the Cedar Rapids Freedom Festival. He was awarded the designation of Diplomate from the National Center for Crisis Management and the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress. Peter has served globally in leadership roles on seventy-five major disasters including the September 11th World Trade Center attack, Hurricane Katrina, Indonesian Tsunami in 2004, the Haiti Earthquake in 2010 and the Genocide in the Darfur Region of Sudan in 2007. He is recognized for his work on aviation disasters, critical incident stress management, and the psycho-social impact of disasters. Peter is the recipient of numerous international and national awards of distinction that includes the National American Legion Auxiliary: National Public Spirit Award. Previous recipients include Ronald Reagan, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Ann Landers, and Dr. Robert Schuller. In 2024, Peter was recognized with Rotary's highest individual honor, The Service Above Self Award. Peter was also recognized as 1 of 9 Rotarians, worldwide, to receive The Rotary Foundation's Service Award for a Polio Free World. Peter and his wife Janet have been active community volunteers for many years.



Peter Teahen

Adam White, *Alaska Airmen's Association*

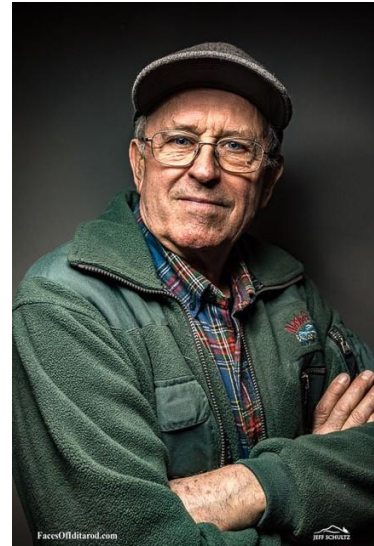
Adam White is the Government Affairs Advocate for the Alaska Airmen's Association. He grew up in Georgia, where his first real job as a kid was washing and refueling airplanes at the local airport, within a short time he was a mechanic's apprentice and flying whenever he could. Adam came to Alaska in 1995 after earning a BS in Aviation Technology from LeTourneau University where he also earned his pilot and mechanic certificates. He holds CFII, Multi, and Seaplane ratings, and is an Itinerant Pastor flying his Maule M7 throughout the Interior visiting homesteads, fish camps and villages. Adam is actively involved in the aviation community of Fairbanks and the Interior, he lives in Nenana with his wife and is the father of three adult daughters.



Adam White

Bernie Willis, *Experimental Aircraft Association*

Bernie was raised around aviation as his father worked for Kelly Johnson at the Lockheed Skunk works. Retired now from Alaska Airlines after 30,000 plus flight hours, 13 years in the Alaska bush from PAKT (Ketchikan) to PABR (Utqiagvik), including 7 years based on St Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea. He maintains A&P/AI and CFII certificates. He is building a Hatz biplane with a Verner radial engine from scratch.



Bernie Willis