DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Federal Aviation Administration

Portland TRACON
7108 NE Airport Way
Portland, OR 97218

Issued: 03/25/2019 2053 (UTC)Portland TRACON

Effective: 03/28/2019 1200 (UTC)
Letter to Airmen: LTA-P80-8

Subject: WARNING FOR THE POSSIBILTY OF GLIDER ACTIVITY IN THE VICINITY OF HILLSBORO, OREGON AND THE NEWBERG VOR

Cancellation: 03/28/2021 1200 (UTC)

Background: During the summer of 2015 there were three filed near mid-air collision (NMAC) reports in the vicinity of HIO involving gliders and aircraft participating in air traffic control services. One NMAC involved a VFR Mooney and a glider operating 5 nautical miles north of the North Plains Gliderport (1OR4). Two NMACs included high performance turbo jets departing HIO and gliders operating near HETAT waypoint. The NMACs occurred at 2600, 2800, and 5000 feet.

In one instance the glider was operating with a mode C transponder and was visible to air traffic control on radar. In the other two instances the gliders were not utilizing a transponder and thus did not produce a consistently visible radar return. In the latter two instances, the air traffic controllers did not observe a pending conflict on their radar display.

HETAT waypoint is part of the HIO BERNI and CHISM instrument departure procedures. HETAT waypoint is approximately 4 nautical miles west of HIO airport. In reference to the ground, HETAT is near the intersection of Susbauer and Wren Roads. This area includes a large cluster of greenhouses, which provide thermal lift desirable to the glider community. On occasion, this thermal lift can carry a glider as high as 10,000 feet, making this a popular location. Another popular glider location is the area often referred to as the “Y”. The “Y” is the junction of Highways 26 and 6, which provides lift from the concrete and asphalt that make up the interchange.

HIO IFR departure aircraft often utilize the BERNI, CHISM, and FARMINGTON Standard Instrument Departure Procedures. These procedures include a sweeping left turn to the south after departure from Runway 31L. During this left turn, aircraft are “belly up” to the greenhouses and the “Y” intersection. In addition, flight crews are looking into the sun during late afternoon departures. This makes for a difficult environment to observe gliders that may be operating in tight circles while tracking thermals upward. In both NMAC reports, the IFR flight crew indicated they did not see the glider until it was too late to take evasive action. In all three instances, the IFR/VFR aircraft and the gliders were in airspace they had the legal right to operate within.

North Plains Gliderport is depicted on the Seattle Sectional Chart and is located northwest of Hillsboro Airport. Glider pilots are aware of and comply with all FAA regulations regarding airspace use. Glider activity is dependent upon prevailing weather conditions and operate under Visual Flight Rules (VFR). No notifications to local aviators in the form of NOTAMS are issued when gliders are operating. Glider activity is mostly invisible to Air Traffic Control radar if the glider is not using an operating transponder on code 1202.

Currently HIO Tower receives notification from the Willamette Valley Soaring Club, when glider operations commence for the day at the North Plains Gliderport. HIO Tower then includes a statement on the HIO ATIS denoting glider activity in the area. When you hear this statement on the HIO ATIS pilots are encouraged to maintain extra vigilance for glider operations and be familiar with popular glider areas. Gliders are also encouraged to utilize transponders, be familiar with HIO IFR and VFR traffic patterns, and monitor PDX approach control frequencies. It is incumbent upon the pilot to maintain extra vigilance when transiting these areas during visual meteorological conditions.

INFORMATION:

1. The attached graphic depicts:

- the “hot spot” around HETAT waypoint.
- a green circle for the Class D surface area.
- the yellow shaded areas indicate where gliders often operate.

- a white line northwest of HIO for the ILS Rwy 13 localizer.
- a red line to the west of HIO for the BERNI and CHISM IFR departure routes to HETAT
- a white line to the south from HETAT for the BERNI departure and the white line to the southeast for the CHISM departure
- HETAT waypoint (GPS coordinates: 45°33.73'N 123°02.52'W)
- North Plains Gliderport 1OR4 (GPS coordinates: 45°36.24'N 123°01.49'W). North Plains Gliderport is the location of the Willamette Valley Soaring Club.
- 1OR3 Sunset Air Strip and OR81 Olinger Strip. Both are locations near HIO that gliders have also utilized.

2. Y Intersection of Hwy 26 and Hwy 6 coordinates: 45°36.17'N 123°03.89'W

3. Willamette Valley Soaring Club website: sites.google.com/site/flywvsc/

4. Normal days of operation are Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays weather permitting

5. Thermal activity allowing higher altitude soaring is prevalent in the afternoons

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the manager or designee of one of the facilities listed below during normal business hours.

Portland Terminal Radar Approach Control: (503)-493-7500

Hillsboro Airport Traffic Control Tower: (503)-615-5484

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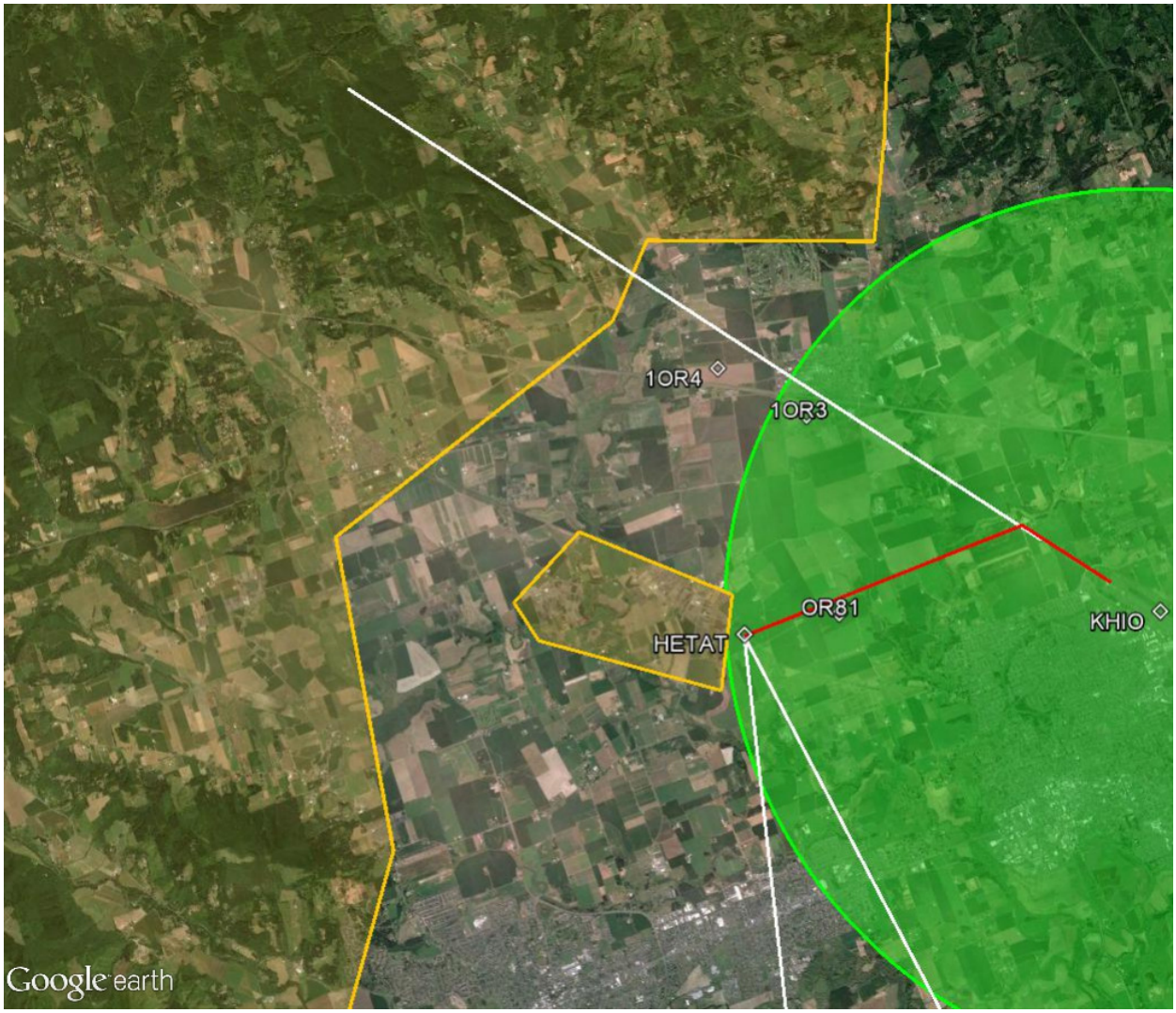
Scott Burk
Air Traffic Manager, Portland TRACON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