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Aviation Weather Produce Change: Transition of Select Area Forecasts to Digital and Graphical Alternatives

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) is a not-for-profit individual membership organization representing the interests of nearly 400,000 pilots and aircraft owners nationwide. AOPA's mission is to effectively serve the interests and needs of its members as aircraft owners and pilots and establish, maintain, and articulate positions of leadership to promote the economy, safety, utility, and popularity of flight in general aviation aircraft. Representing two thirds of all pilots in the United States, AOPA is the largest civil aviation organization in the world. AOPA submits the following comments regarding the "Transition of Select Area Forecasts to Digital and Graphical Alternatives" notice posted in the Federal Register on Wednesday, June 18, 2014.

AOPA is supportive of your efforts to formally recommend that the National Weather Service (NWS) transition the identified area forecasts to digital and graphical alternatives that are already being produced by the NWS. We would like to see these products merged with those produced by Environment Canada to create a seamless product which accurately reflects the weather general aviation pilots would encounter, irrespective of the border.

Weather does not stop at the border, nor should the products that are produced to provide aviators the critical weather information that they need to complete their flights safely. In the past, a joint working group recommended the creation of a North American forecast product to mitigate the impact of intense convection on air traffic, and ensure an effective and efficient use of the airspace. While some products currently do extend across the border, such as prognostic charts that have been produced by NOAA, they do not contain the necessary information that pilots get from the area forecasts. It would be not only convenient but much safer for a common product to be available for use on both sides of the border. The FAA initiative to transition area forecasts to digital and graphical alternatives provides the perfect opportunity for the FAA and Nav Canada to work together to make cross border weather products a reality.

AOPA strongly encourages that you work to provide a seamless cross-border aviation weather product as part of the transition to digital and graphical alternatives.

Respectfully,

Melissa Rudinger
Vice President, Government Affairs