



United States Soaring Team Task Force

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Founding Proposal To SSA Board of Directors

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Introduction

This document proposes the creation of a U.S. Team Policy Review Task Force.

This proposal outlines a review process, highlights current challenges and makes recommendations to bring a much higher level of transparency, accountability, management structure and competitiveness to the U.S. Soaring Teams. If adopted, this effort will involve fundamental changes in the way the U.S. Soaring Teams are organized, managed and funded in the new world of multiple teams and championships.



Paul MacCready Sr and Paul MacCready Jr at the 5th World Gliding Championships in 1954.

In 1950 it was simple. A single pilot, Paul MacCready, Jr., flying in a single class, represented the United States at a single World Gliding Championship. Since then there have been nearly 130 United States Soaring Team members flying in 33 World Soaring Championships.

Recently the FAI and IGC have added new classes and international championships. Today there are potentially eighteen pilots representing the United States, flying in eight classes, from five international sites in a single championship year. These new classes and new championships have opened up international participation to new segments of the soaring community. This greatly expanded field of eligible pilots and multiple international events has placed unprecedented strains on the management and funding of United States Soaring Teams.

In light of these recent changes occurring at the international level of competitive soaring the time has come to examine fundamentally how the United States Soaring Teams do business and to develop successful new strategies for funding and managing our teams.

Current Crisis in U.S. Team Organization & Funding

With the advent of more eligible classes participating in multiple international events operating out of multiple sites, the U.S. Soaring Team concept is in desperate need of revision. The challenge is to build on the already sound management policies of the team while developing new ways of operating in a multi-team and multi-venue environment.

More eligible pilots participating in more international championships has created a significant funding shortfall for sponsoring U.S. Soaring Teams. The large dollar budget needed to field teams has made fundraising a top priority for team management and created inequities in resource allocation between teams.

FAI Classes Eligible for Competing in World Soaring Championships		
Class	Year	Championship
Open	1937	Germany
Two Place*	1952	Spain
Standard	1958	Poland
15-Meter	1978	France
World	1997	Turkey
Junior	1999	Holland
18-Meter	2001	Spain
Club	2001	Australia
Feminine	2001	Lithuania
* Eliminated 1958		

Year of first FAI World Soaring Championships.
Note recent increase.

Self sponsorship is becoming more prominent, potentially allowing only the financially well off to participate on U.S. Soaring Teams.

The increased need for team funding is tightly interconnected with creating an organization emphasizing transparency, accountability, management structure and competitiveness. Contributors to the U.S. Team organization have the right to know what the policies of the U.S. Team are and how team management spends their dollars. Add to this the danger of contributor overload as more soaring related requests for contributions are being made on would-be contributors and you have a crisis in the making.

Now is the time to review U.S. Team operating practices and procedures, solicit input from the soaring community and meld the existing parts into an organizational structure operating on sound management policies and procedures that delivers on the potential of U.S. Soaring Teams.

U.S. Soaring Team History

Since 1950, when legendary Paul MacCready represented the United States in the Swedish World Gliding Championships, there have been over 130 individual opportunities to compete in 33 Championships. Over the years a total of four United States Pilots have earned the title of World Champion.



George Moffat winning in the Worlds 1974

For years the United States Soaring Teams have been funded and managed with little formal structure or organization. The level of organizational success (apart from flying success) was closely tied to the talents of the team manager who had little external support or need for accountability. This informal structure was manageable due to the small size of the teams and single venue of the championships.

As time passed, a few more classes were created and team management evolved with the SSA providing staff support for fundraising activities such as the sweepstakes. The rules for selecting team members have evolved as well. John Good along with the Rules Committee refined a performance based team selection process.

In 1996-7, Team Manager, Mark Huffstutler working with past world champions Doug Jacobs and George Moffat created the first set of policies, procedures and guidelines for US Soaring Team management. These guidelines were critical both as an internal management tool and in making the whole operation more transparent and accountable.

In 2001 Aland Adams refined the team selection and funding process.

Current U.S. Soaring Team Organization

United States Soaring Teams are managed by the US Team Committee Chairman as established and ratified by the Soaring Society of America Board of Directors in 1995. The Committee is composed of a Chairperson and four committee members. The Chair reports the Chairman of the US Contest Committee.

To understand the US Soaring Teams and how they are selected and managed one needs to understand the overall framework in which they operate. It must be stressed that these positions are filled by hard working volunteers who contribute time and energy to the competitive soaring movement in the U.S. They deserve our gratitude, respect, and admiration.

US Contest Committee	
🏆 US Rules Committee	🏆 US IGC Representative
🏆 US Team Committee	🏆 US FAI/National Records
🏆 US National Site Selection Committee	

All competitive soaring issues in the U.S. fall under the purview of the Contest Committee which in turn is made up of several sub committees managing the areas of rules, site selection, records, IGC representation, and the US Soaring Teams.

Currently Ken Sorenson is the US Contest Committee Chairman, Karl Striedieck is the Rules Chairman, Eric Mozer is the IGC Representative, Arleen Coleson and Jackie Payne handle FAI/National Records, Dick Mockler is the US National Site Selection Chairman, and Gary Kemp is the US Team Committee Chairman.

U.S. Team Committee

The US Team Committee Chairman is charged with overseeing the affairs of the Soaring Society of America with respect to its representation at Federation Aeronautique Internationale (FAI) approved World Gliding Championships. The mission of the U.S. Team Committee, as outlined in the Committee's [Policies and Procedures Manual](#), is to field a fully funded, totally prepared, and highly competitive team to all FAI sanctioned World Gliding Championships. There are four U.S. Team Committee Members. These members include Administration, Fund-raising, Competitive and Technology. U.S. Team Captains are responsible for all administrative concerns of the various teams while at a World Gliding Championships. Each Team Coach is in charge of all competitive issues and concerns during the practice period and Championships.

The Future of U.S. Soaring Teams

United States Soaring Teams and the organization that manages these teams have reached a critical crossroads. More classes, eligible pilots and international championships open tremendous opportunity to many new segments of the soaring community. These changes have also placed great strain on the funding and management structure of the United States Soaring Teams. The soaring community needs to make some clear choices going forward regarding participation, funding, management and policy regarding the U.S. Soaring Teams.

The US Soaring Teams need a revised system of management as well as new policies and procedures. The current structure is not suited to the new realities of many more WGC pilots, teams and venues.

US Teams To World Gliding Championships Locations 2001 / 2002

27th World Gliding Championships

South Africa
December 18-31 2001

1st 18-Meter World Championships

Spain
June 18-July 1, 2001

3rd World Class World Championships

Spain
June 18-July 1, 2001

1st Club Class World Championships

Australia
January 7-27, 2001

2nd Junior World Gliding Championships

France
August 5-19, 2001

2nd Club Class World Championships

Germany
August 10-24, 2002

This chart graphically illustrates the expanded number of United States Soaring Teams participating in World Soaring Championships around the world.

The U.S. is not alone in facing these questions. Our international competitors face similar choices about the future of their competitive efforts.

U.S. Team Policy Review Task Force

It is proposed that the U.S. Contest Committee Chair convene a body to undertake a review of how U.S. Soaring Teams are organized, managed and funded in the new world of multiple teams and championships. The proposed name for this body is the, "U.S. Team Policy Review Task Force."

The Mission

The mission of the U.S. Team Policy Review Task Force is to accomplish a fundamental review of how United States Soaring teams currently do business, solicit community input, investigate areas for improvement, develop solutions, author a report and provide implementation assistance.

The Principles

The guiding principles of the U.S. Team Policy Review Task Force is to rework the U.S. Team structure and operational policies to encourage high levels of organizational transparency and accountability, management support, continuity and competitiveness in the U.S. Soaring Team organization.

The Purpose

The long term purpose of the U.S. Team Policy Review Task Force is to establish the U.S. Soaring Teams and the underlying organization as the most capable of all international soaring teams.

The Process

The first step of the five step process includes the formation of a 6 member U.S. Team Policy Review Task Force. This 6 member Panel will be charged with accomplishing the mission stated above. The second step will involve a review of how U.S. Soaring Teams currently operate and solicit feed back regarding specific problems and solutions from a wide variety of participants. Third, develop solutions to the challenges identified. Fourth, author a report on findings and update the existing U.S. Team Funding and Selection Policies document and the U.S. Team Policy & Procedures Manual. Fifth, implement the findings of the report in concert with team management.

The Time Frame

A report from the U.S. Team Policy Review Task Force will be presented to the SSA Directors at their February 2003 board meeting.

The Results

It is time to bring all the parts together into one unified U.S. Soaring Team plan that addresses many of the challenges now present in the process we use to fund, field and manage U.S. Soaring Teams. This effort will involve fundamental changes to the way the US Soaring Teams are organized, managed and funded in the new world of multiple teams and championships

The Benefits

A more robust U.S. Team organization emphasizing increased transparency, accountability, and management structure may attract contributions in support of fielding the expanded number of U.S. Soaring Teams. A more supportive organization with documented procedures and established expectations will attract quality team managers and captains, and will ease the fundraising task. In the final analysis, well organized teams with adequate funding are more competitive and more enjoyable.



The Challenges

As history can be a powerful teacher, the recommendations ultimately made by the U.S. Team Policy Review Task Force should address weaknesses in the current system. Here are some of the comments and topics that will be addressed.

- **What are the goals of the US Teams?**

The most obvious goal of the U.S. Teams is to win. For some of the classes this may not actually be the primary goal. For some competition classes the goal may be to provide a reward for top performance and/or encourage participation in the sport. The goal(s) for each class need to be defined.

- **SSA time and resources spent on US Teams**

FAI world competition is available to only a handful of pilots, and does not generate any Government funding for the sport or draw significant media attention to help attract new glider pilots, so why does the SSA spend so much time and money on the World Team?

- **The US Teams need to connect with grass roots**

Team members could do a better job of promoting the U.S. Teams. We need the team pilots to bond with the general membership and become actively involved if fund raising is to improve.

- **Only pilots who can fly multiple nationals can participate**

Many members don't see the need to provide U.S. Team financial support since team contenders must already be "well heeled" in order to muster 2 gliders and fly at least 2 Nationals to make the team.

- **SSA handling of US Team contributions**

There is concern about how the SSA handles U.S. Team contributions. Keeping the various contributions straight is a complex task. Right now funds come into the SSA office from various sources with little control. A person can contribute to the US team and the team management is not notified. There needs to be a single person responsible for gathering and tracking all the various team contributions and funding – a U.S. Team Treasurer. This person would be responsible for reviewing team budgets, collecting team funding and issuing a year end team financial report.

- **Organizational transparency & accountability**

Communication with the membership by team management and the SSA must improve. Budgets, meeting minutes, and management comments need to be made available to the membership. Wrap up reports from team captains including the final accounting should be required. Contributors deserve to know that team funds are used effectively in a fully transparent and accountable manner. Any revised team management structure needs to have procedures that make the U.S. Teams clearly accountable to the people who ultimately fund the teams efforts – the soaring public. Increased transparency and better oversight are vital to future funding efforts.

- **Team management & support**

Historically the chairman of the US Team Committee was the de facto Team Manager to the single team. This system is no longer feasible with multiple teams and multiple venues. A management structure needs to be developed that will provide support for multiple team captains while providing a level of oversight and burden sharing with team management. Currently there is little support or guidance provided to team management. A more formal support network that draws on experienced team members and supporters is needed provide assistance and guidance to team management.

- **Consistency in team operations over time**

From a competitive and managerial standpoint U.S. Teams tend to reinvent the wheel with every new team captain or team manager. This is no adequate process for gathering and preserving knowledge gained by previous teams or managers. Continuity is critical. The new team management structure must be robust enough to withstand the transient nature of team volunteers, pilots and captains as they come and go.

- **Documentation: expectations and responsibilities**

Any organization, if it is going to be successful, needs to have clearly defined expectations for its members. Team pilots, crewmembers, captains and managers need to have a well-defined set of policies, procedures, and financial guidelines from which to operate. These policies set the expectations and insure that all team members are treated in a fair and consistent manner. The team needs to have a comprehensive practices, procedures and organizational manual outlining responsibilities and expectations for pilots, crew, managers and supporters. The existing U.S. Team Policies and Procedures Manual needs to be expanded and updated – and then used.

- **Reporting on the Team and Championships**

The team needs to have a team report soon after the teams are selected. The US Team Web site is available to provide more in-depth information on the US Team. This could be used to attract sponsors and contributors. Historically World Championships have been reported in Soaring Magazine. Recently Chuck O'Mahony has written excellent articles. The advent of the Internet has allowed organizers and teams to report directly during the competition. On the marketing side, contest information can be offered as a premium service – i.e. direct e-mail updates can be provided to sponsors and contributors as part of a contribution program.

- **Team PR**

This is a two sided challenge. In the past little was required of pilots selected to the US Team. There could be requirements for team pilots to fulfill PR duties to build grass roots support from within the soaring community and/or to help develop funding from outside sources. There needs to be an effort on the part of US teams to build more recognition generally. This would involve press contacts on a national level. The story is there, it just needs to be organized and communicated.

- **Sponsorship**

When people hear sponsorship they think big check. The reality is that U.S. Team structure is not presently deep enough or mature enough to attract and manage large sponsors. The fact is also that the sport cannot give large sponsors what they want – namely large, highly targeted television audiences. Sponsorship programs need to be developed on an individual basis and for small, soaring related businesses.

Sponsorship products need to be developed for individuals as well. Various levels with clear rewards – tee shirt, pin, recognition on the web site or on the e-mail list for the X level contribution.

- **Do the US Teams spend money wisely?**

The cold truth is that the biggest thing heard from potential long or short term contributors is something along the line of, "I do not know how the US Teams will spend my money" or "the U.S. teams will not spend money wisely". This may be more perception than reality but is exactly why funding should be only a small part of the overall strategy, with organization and accountability also needing attention. History has shown that big teams with many extra people tend to engender this attitude in contributors. There needs to be much more transparency regarding the sources and uses of team funds before the team movement can attract meaningful contributions.

- **Distribution of funding among the various US Teams**

This is a thorny issue as the US currently can partially fund all the teams or fully fund some of the teams – but not both. The question is how to accomplish a fair distribution of funds to the various sanctioned teams.

- **Competitiveness**

It was hoped that team flying at the World Championships was being phased out by limiting participation in each class to one pilot per country. This change does not appear to be happening quickly, if at all. Can the U.S. Teams win at the Worlds without more regimented team flying? Is there additional training we could provide our pilots? Is the current selection system working to produce the most competitive U.S. Teams? Do our competition rules, which are so different than those used in World Championships, affect the success of our U.S. Teams?

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