

Aviation Group Client Update

Date: March 9, 2012

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UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM TEST SITES

Today, the FAA published a request for comments on the pilot program established to integrate Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) into the National Airspace System (NAS) by identifying six initial test sites. The proposal is in response to the National Defense Authorization Act's mandate requiring site designation within 180 days after December 30, 2011. In addition, the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012, requires the FAA Administrator to designate airspace and develop certification standards and air traffic requirements for UAS.

The FAA believes the sites should provide an environment and opportunity to test the following: (1) conventional takeoff and landing capability; (2) high speed flight; (3) maritime launch, maneuver, and recovery capability; (4) operations at extremely high altitudes; and (5) evaluation of dissimilar aircraft in multiple altitude structures. Likewise, the FAA is considering restricting UAS flight test operations to those conducted over open water or sparsely populated areas having light air traffic.

The FAA is seeking public comment to help refine UAS test site requirements, designation standards, and oversight activities. A list of targeted questions for comment may be found at [77 Fed. Reg. 14319 \(Mar. 9, 2012\)](#). Comments are due on or before **May 8, 2012**. Please contact our office with questions or for assistance with the preparation and submission of comments.

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