

# GROUP GATHERS AT CLEAR LAKE IN CALIFORNIA TO PROMOTE YOUTH AVIATION EDUCATION AND CELEBRATE SEAPLANE FLYING

By Annamarie Buonocore

For those who enjoy seaplane flying, Clear Lake, California's largest fresh water lake, is a must-see destination. Just north of the San Francisco Bay Area, Clear Lake offers a recreational area that is ideal for outdoor enthusiasts. The local airport, Lampson Field (1O2), in Lakeport is unique. It features an excellent on field restaurant (Reds at the Skyroom), a full service aircraft maintenance business and a renowned structural airframe repair business.

Here at *In Flight USA*, we are fortunate to have visited Clear Lake in April of 2023. The Clear Lake Flying Club hosted a two-day conference which included seminars, panel discussions, seaplane flight training, a wine tasting and catered dinner and an aerial photography exhibition. The educational conference drew pilots and aviation professionals from throughout California and from Alaska and the East Coast.

Presenters at the conference included Steve Bateman from AOPA, Tom Beattie, instructor and test pilot for ICON Aircraft, Kent Carlomagno, Terry Hayes from Foothill Aviation and the Backcountry Flying Experience, Paul Koscheka from the FAA, Missy Lee, the owner of Alaska Floats and Skis, Herb Lingl, Gordon Mills from Alpine Aviation and Amy Hartsfield of the Professional Aerial Photographers Association.

Speakers reflected on their experiences in aviation and encouraged younger participants to pursue aviation as a career and as an avocation. They emphasized the importance of increasing diversity in the



*The Clear Lake Flying Club hosted a two-day conference recently that offered a special emphasis on seaplane flying, notably from Clear Lake, which is well suited for seaplane operations because it is large and located at lightly above 1,300 feet.*

(Courtesy Herb Lingl)

field and gave thought-provoking advice on how to be a better pilot or aviation professional. While most of the participants in the hangar did not have their seaplane rating, many felt encouraged to obtain the rating after listening to the workshops. "I enjoyed every minute of it," said Kent Carlomagno, a pilot from Petaluma, California who flies a SeaMax seaplane. "Everything they are addressing is so important to seaplane flying."

Other speakers included Tom and Tina Wasson of Tom's Aircraft, an aviation maintenance business based at Lampson Field. "It was a really fun day and brought a lot of people together," said Tina Wasson.

Clear Lake offers an unparalleled experience for seaplane flying. The lake is well suited for seaplane operations

because it is large and located at an elevation of only slightly above 1300-feet. As noted by Clark McAbee, the curator of the Museums of Lake County in his presentation at the conference about seaplanes on Clear Lake from the 1930s through the 1950s, both the military and Pan Am Airlines made extensive use of Clear Lake for their seaplane operations. Lampson Field Airport, only a few miles from the Clear Lake shoreline, is quiet and peaceful yet full of life thanks to a community of pilots with a passion for aviation.

This wonderful April 2023 conference happened thanks to one passionate pilot and aerial photographer named Herb Lingl and numerous volunteers who dedicated their time and energy in order to turn this conference into a reality.

Lingl moved to the Bay Area from

the New York in his 30s. He founded Aerial Archives in San Francisco, spent over 20 years growing the business at the Petaluma Municipal Airport (O69), and eventually moved to Lakeport a few years after he took his first seaplane lesson at Clear Lake. Lingl said he hopes the conference will help encourage Lake County schools to offer aviation education and help further develop aviation and seaplane flying in Lake County.

As Lingl noted in his presentation about the Clear Lake Flying Club Youth Aviation Program, the flying club is committed to providing support to schools in Lake County that teach aviation including hands on experience for students.

On the second-day of the conference, the group transitioned from educational workshops to a seaplane fly out to Lake Berryessa in Napa County.

"This conference should bring attention and business up here to Lampson Field," said Tom Wasson. We believe this will be true, as people discover one of Northern California's best-kept secrets.

The participants who attended the conference clearly had a great time and learned a lot.

Here at *In Flight USA*, we are confident that the Clear Lake Aviation Gathering conference will help develop aviation and seaplane flying in Lake County and encourage Lake County schools to consider providing STEM aviation classes in conjunction with practical training provided by the Clear Lake Flying Club.

For more information about flying in Lake County, California, please visit [clearlakeflyingclub.com](http://clearlakeflyingclub.com).

## FAA Easing Mental Health Barriers for Pilots

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rules from the FAA that will make it easier for pilots to regain their medical certificates and decrease wait times for pilots grounded for mental health issues.

Additionally, Northrup spoke about the success of the four selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor medications approved for pilot use in 2010 and announced plans to add seven more SSRIs to the approved list.

Northrup, a private pilot and retired U.S. Air Force colonel, has been focused on addressing mental health issues within the FAA since her 2021 appointment as the most senior medical certification official. In 2022, Northrup participated in an AOPA roundtable discussion on pilot mental health at EAA AirVenture

Oshkosh, where she said, "Mental health conditions remain high on my list of things we need to address within the FAA," emphasizing her focus on early intervention and the importance of changing the aviation culture around mental health issues.

A 2022 study published in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* found that 56.1 percent of pilots reported a history of health care avoidant behavior related to fear of losing their aeromedical certificate, and nearly 27 percent indicated misrepresenting or withholding information on their aeromedical screening for the same reason.

Northrup's address at the Business Aviation Safety Summit, organized by the

Flight Safety Foundation and National Business Aviation Association and held during Mental Health Awareness Month, also discussed the volume of pilots whose applications have a mental health component, aiming to "dispel the myths" about certification qualification so barriers to treatment can be destroyed, *AIN* reported.

Currently, 30 to 40 percent of applicants reviewed by the FAA have a mental health component, yet only 0.1 to 0.2 percent are denied certification or recertification.

However, AOPA recognizes the need for the FAA to provide transparent, repeatable, and logical decision paths for applicants to count on when self-identifying mental health issues.

AOPA, NBAA, and several pilot

unions including the Air Line Pilots Association, Allied Pilots Association, NetJets Association of Jet Aircraft Pilots, and Southwest Airlines Pilots Association are pursuing legislation to help address needed and long-overdue reforms to the FAA's medical practices and protocols. In the meantime, AOPA strongly supports the need for pilots to get the help they need, and will continue to report on advancements in FAA policies around mental health and provide resources for pilots. In addition, AOPA encourages their members to call their Pilot Information Center at 800-872-2672 for help in addressing these and other issues.