

PIREPS

Billy G Ray Field Celebrates Grand Re-Opening

Billy G Ray Field in Chappell celebrated its grand re-opening on August 14 following the completion of major improvements to the airport. The runway rehabilitation and new runway lighting represent a significant investment in the airport, including \$1,408,500 in grants from the Nebraska Department of Transportation, Division of Aeronautics, along with additional local funding and grants.

The runway was rehabilitated using Full Depth Reclamation (FDR), a process that reuses the existing pavement and underlying materials rather than removing and replacing everything. The existing materials are pulverized, mixed together, and strengthened to create a solid, uniform base, which is then topped with new pavement. The result is a stronger, more durable runway while making efficient use of the materials already in place.

The improvements are the latest chapter in a long history of community support for the airport. Established around 1967 through the efforts of local community members, including Billy Ray, a WWII pilot and Chris Ray's father, the airport has served the Chappell area for nearly 60 years. Chris Ray, who has managed the airport for the past 18 years, has continued that legacy by advocating for improvements, building community support, and helping secure the airport's local share along with additional grants from other local sources.



PIREPS

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Re-Opening (cont'd)

The grand re-opening drew strong support from the community, with aircraft flying in for the celebration and pilots, Chappell residents and community leaders, and representatives from the Nebraska State Patrol, Western Nebraska Community College, the State of Nebraska, attending the open house and hot dog lunch. The improvements have already increased activity at the airport, with agricultural aircraft, emergency air crews, local pilots, and other aircraft using the facility regularly. The renewed airport is an important asset to Chappell and the surrounding area, supporting emergency services, agriculture, business aviation, visitors, and economic development. The community expressed its gratitude for the investment and excitement about the airport's future. ■



Can you identify the following Nebraska public airport based on the following aerial snippet? North is up.
(Answer is on the last page)



Visual Flight Rules Departure

By David Morris

There may be times when we need to fly an Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) flight plan due to weather we likely will encounter at a later time (or if you simply wish to fly IFR to remain proficient), but the weather outside is clearly Visual Flight Rules (VFR). It may be that we can depart VFR, but we need to get an IFR clearance shortly after departing the airport. A VFR departure can be used as a tool that allows us to get off the ground without having to wait for a time slot in the IFR system; however, departing VFR with the intent of receiving an IFR clearance in the air can also present serious hazards worth considering. I observed an aircraft depart VFR in marginal VFR weather, was restricted in the climb due to low ceilings, and the Air Route Traffic Control Center (ARTCC) communications tower was too far away for the pilot to effectively communicate with ATC in seeking an IFR clearance.

A VFR departure dramatically changes the takeoff responsibilities for the pilot and Air Traffic Control (ATC). Upon receiving clearance for a VFR departure, we are cleared to depart; however, we must maintain separation between ourselves and other traffic. We are also responsible for maintaining terrain and obstruction clearance as well as remaining in VFR weather conditions. We cannot fly in Instrument Meteorological Conditions (IMC) without first receiving an IFR clearance. Likewise, a VFR departure relieves ATC of these duties, and basically requires them only to provide us with safety alerts as workload permits.

Maintain VFR until we have obtained our IFR clearance and have ATC approval to proceed on course in accordance with the clearance. If we accept this clearance and are below the minimum IFR altitude for operations in the area, we accept responsibility for terrain/obstruction clearance until we reach that altitude. ■

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September

- 9/1 - 9/2** | Nebraska Association of Air Medical Services | Scottsbluff, NE | Time: TBD | Additional information: <https://www.neaams.org/annual-safety-symposium/>
- 9/10 - 9/13** | 2026 Tandem Wing Fly-In | O'Neill Municipal Airport (ONL)
- 9/12** | EAA 804 - Sandhills Airforce Breakfast | O'Neill Municipal Airport (ONL) | 8-10am (free-will donation)
- 9/12** | EAA 569 Fly-In Breakfast | Wahoo Municipal Airport (AHQ) | 8-10am | suggested donation: \$10/adults; \$5/kids
- 9/16** | Third Wednesday Cookouts hosted by the Great Plains Wing of the Commemorative Air Force | Council Bluffs Municipal Airport (KCBF) | 16803 McCandless Road, Council Bluffs, IA | 5:30-7pm (free-will donation) | contact: Jeff at 402-981-4633
- 9/20** | Fly-In Breakfast hosted by Albion Municipal Airport (PIC eat free) | 8-11am | Albion Municipal Airport (BVN) | Contact Tony Levander for additional information 402-741-5054
- 9/20** | AppleJack Fly-in/Drive-In Pancake Feed hosted by Blue Line Aviation | Nebraska City Airport (AFK) | 7am-12pm
- 9/20** | Girls in Aviation Day! 2026 | Event by: Women in Aviation Cornhusker Chapter and Lincoln Airport | Lincoln Airport (LNK), 1761 W Kearney Ave., Lincoln, NE | 1-3pm
- 9/21** | Nebraska Business Aviation Association Pre-Golf BBQ | 5-7:30pm | Location TBD | <https://nebaa.org/event-6404159>
- 9/22** | Nebraska Business Aviation Association Golf Tournament | 9am | Location TBD | <https://nebaa.org/golf>
- 9/26** | Nebraska Chapter of the Antique Airplane Association Hamburger Fly-In | Hastings Municipal Airport (KHSI) | 11:30am-1pm (free-will donation)

October - December

- 10/16** | Nebraska Aeronautics Commission Meeting | Kearney Regional Airport (EAR) | Time TBD | agenda will be available in the Nebraska Aeronautics Commission section of the website
- 11/5** | Nebraska Business Aviation Association Fall Luncheon | 11:30am-1:30pm | Location TBD | <https://nebaa.org/event-6409341>
- 12/4** | Nebraska Aeronautics Commission Meeting | NDOT Central Complex, 1500 Nebraska Parkway, Lincoln, NE 68502 | 1pm | agenda will be available in the Nebraska Aeronautics Commission section of the website

PILOTS • BUILDERS • AVIATION ENTHUSIASTS *All Are Welcome!*



2026 TANDEM WING FLY-IN
"Field of Dreams"

SEPTEMBER 10-13, 2026

Hosted by
THE STEARNS FAMILY
QUICKIE Q200
Barry, Mandy, Barrett, and Collen Stearns

O'NEILL MUNICIPAL AIRPORT (ONL)
87204 John Baker Rd
O'Neill, NE 68763

✈ COME FLY IN! TANDEM WING AIRCRAFT • QUICKIE / Q200 / DRAGONFLY • COZY / LONGEZ • ALL AIRCRAFT WELCOME	👥 CONNECT MEET GREAT PEOPLE, SHARE IDEAS, PROJECTS, AND KNOWLEDGE.	🍴 BREAKFAST EAA CHAPTER #804 - SANDHILLS AIRFORCE BREAKFAST ON SATURDAY THE 12TH. FREE WILL DONATION	🏠 LODGING BLOCK OF ROOMS AVAILABLE FOR PARTICIPANTS. CONTACT US FOR BOOKING DETAILS.
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★★ Great Planes. Great People. Great Memories. ★★
WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU IN O'NEILL!



EAA CHAPTER 569

MONTHLY FLY-IN BREAKFAST
2nd Saturday of the Month (April - October)
8am - 10am

Come for Good Food, Good Fun, and Good Conversation!

Wahoo Municipal Airport **KAHQ**