



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric**  
**Administration**  
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE SOUTHERN  
REGION  
819 Taylor Street, Room 10E09  
Fort Worth, TX 76102

January 21, 2021

Richard Ebert  
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Dear Mr. Ebert and Mr. Peters,

There are eight (8) Gulf of Mexico (GOM) AWOS weather boxes (defined by two weather reporting stations within 40 NM) that are eligible for permanent approval following a provisional test period of 12 months or more without any discrepancy reports. The weather box pairings eligible for transition from provisional approval to permanent approval are provided in the chart below and depicted in white on the map on page 2 of this letter. None of the AWOS locations revealed a trend of inaccurate weather reports in accordance with our guidance issued on March 8, 2017 (attached).

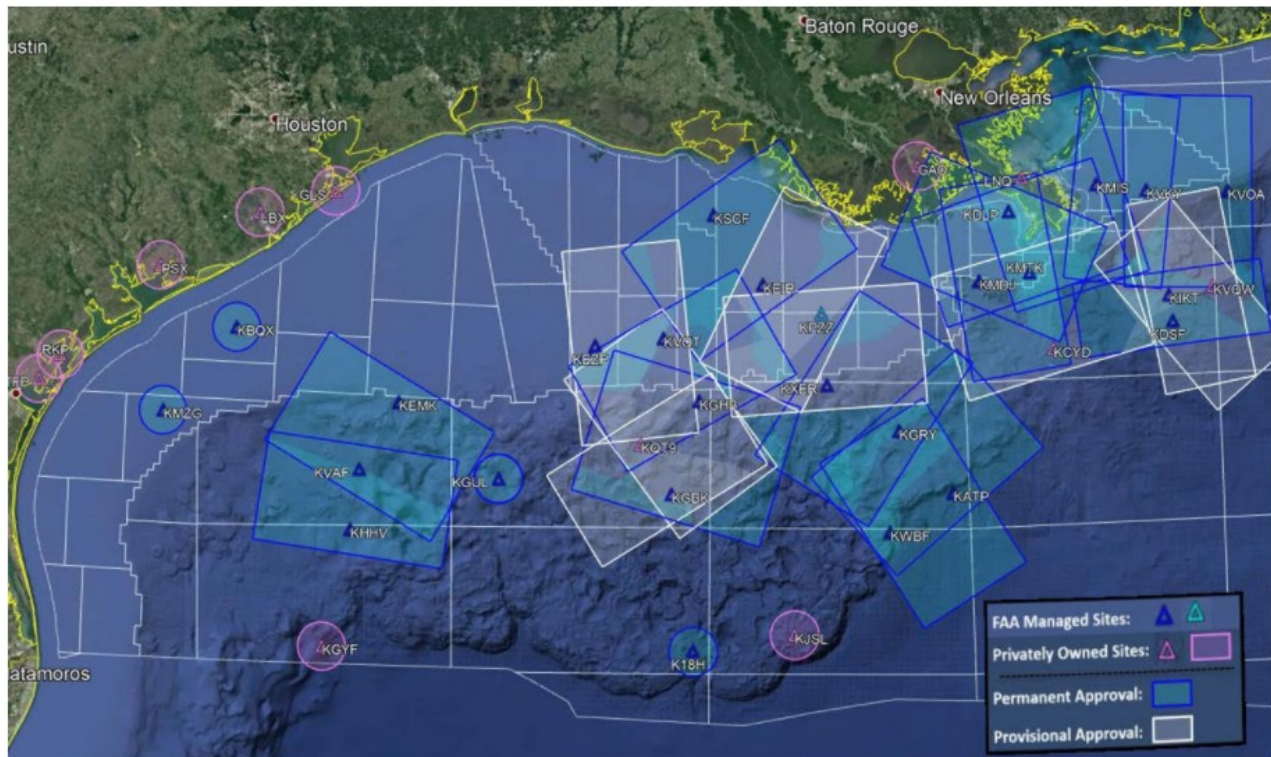
Five (5) of the weather box pairings eligible for permanent approval authorization are weather boxes which incorporate a privately-owned weather station; each has met the 12-month provisional approval criteria. Authorization to incorporate non-federal, privately owned AWOS pairings into weather boxes was authorized in the February 7, 2020 GOM Provisional Approval Non Fed Sites letter (attached).



The eight (8) areas receiving permanent approval effective today, January 21, 2021 are:

| # | Pairing Station 1                       |            | Pairing Station 2              |                 | NWS<br>Provisional<br>Approval<br>Date |
|---|---|------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|--|
|   | Block No. / Platform Name               | FAA<br>LID | Block No. / Platform Name<br>2 | FAA<br>LID<br>2 |  |
| 1 | Green Canyon 19                         | XER        | Ship Shoal 241                 | PZZ             | 7/30/2019                              |
| 2 | Eugene Island 215B                      | EIR        | Ship Shoal 241                 | PZZ             | 7/30/2019                              |
| 3 | Garden Banks 426/Auger                  | QT9        | Garden Banks 783 /<br>Magnolia | GBK             | 11/23/2019*                            |
| 4 | Garden Banks 426/Auger                  | QT9        | Garden Banks 172 / Salsa       | GHB             | 11/23/2019*                            |
| 5 | Mississippi Canyon 437A /<br>Appomattox | VQW        | Mississippi Canyon 474         | IKT             | 11/23/2019*                            |
| 6 | Mississippi Canyon 437A /<br>Appomattox | VQW        | Mississippi Canyon 650         | DSF             | 11/23/2019*                            |
| 7 | Mississippi Canyon 807 / Mars           | CYD        | South Pass 89E-B               | MTK             | 11/23/2019*                            |
| 8 | East Cameron 321A                       | EZP        | Vermillion 331A                | VQT             | 12/17/2019                             |

\*Effective Approval Date (approval letter dated 2/07/2020)



Our joint FAA-NWS policy regarding using destination weather for certificate holders in the GOM has proved beneficial to operators while maintaining safety as a top priority. FAA Advisory Circular 90-80C Section 4.7.2 dated December 12, 2017 addresses the use of offshore observation areas in the Gulf of Mexico. These so-called “weather boxes”, no larger than 60 x 80 NM, must have at least 2 approved AWOS weather stations within each box. The observations are used for destination weather to any platform within that particular weather box.

Sincerely,

*Paul G Witsaman*

Paul G. Witsaman  
Regional Aviation Meteorologist

Attachments: March 8, 2017 GOM Weather Box Establishment Memo  
February 7, 2020 GOM Provisional Approval for Non Fed AWOS Sites



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March 8, 2017

Marcus T. Sampson  
Regional Specialist, ASW-230  
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Dear Mr. Sampson,

Our personnel have reviewed the request, dated February 3, 2017, for the use of alternate weather sources in lieu of destination weather for certificate holders located in the Gulf of Mexico. The request includes a process where a certificate holder would use a weather report from an approved source located within 10 NM. If an approved weather source is not available within 10 NM, then the certificate holder would use the two nearest operational approved weather sources located in a box that is 60 NM by 80 NM. The lowest weather report of the two sources would be used as the destination weather.

The basis for the request is that there are currently hundreds of landing sites located in the Gulf of Mexico. Approximately 40 AWOS III automated weather stations provide weather reporting in the Gulf of Mexico. The use of a weather source not located at the actual landing location requires an investigation by the National Weather Service in accordance with 14 CFR Part 135 §135.213(b). While evaluating the request, we considered the following:

- There is currently a grid of approved AWOS III weather reporting stations located throughout the Gulf of Mexico.
- Certificate holders located in the Gulf of Mexico have been using the process identified in the request for several years.

Our recommendation is that this request be given provisional approval for one year from the date on this letter using the alternate weather process described in the request. This one year period is for the purpose of gathering data to confirm the accuracy of the alternate weather locations with respect to the actual landing sites. During the provisional period each certificate holder who is authorized to use the alternate weather sources based on this recommendation should record each time that the alternate weather source reported weather is different than the actual weather at the destination, based on the pilot's observations. This report is required only when the actual weather is less than a ceiling of 1000' or visibility is less than 2NM. Each report should include the observed cloud



heights and visibility as well as the reported cloud heights and visibility. These reports should be kept by the certificate holder for a period of 13 months and provided to the FAA or National Weather Service upon request. The certificate holder will continually evaluate the suitability of the alternate weather source and discontinue use of any reporting location that does not accurately represent the landing site. The certificate holder should report any discontinued use due to inaccuracy to the FAA field office immediately.

At the expiration of the 1 year provisional period, the approval should become a final approval. The provisional period weather reporting requirements will continue after final approval. The NWS and the FAA field office should review the data reports on a regular basis. Any locations that show a trend of inaccurate weather reports as determined by the NWS or FAA will be excluded from the approval.

Sincerely,



Paul G. Witsaman  
Regional Aviation Meteorologist



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February 7, 2020

Wyatt Seeger  
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Dear Mr. Seeger,

Our joint FAA-NWS policy regarding using Gulf of Mexico (GOM) destination weather for certificate holders in the GOM has proved beneficial to operators while maintaining safety as a top priority. The Helicopter Safety Advisory Conference (HSAC) has proposed a prudent adjustment to the provisions of FAA Advisory Circular 90-80C dated December 12, 2017. The advisory addresses the use of offshore observation areas in the Gulf of Mexico. These areas are called “weather boxes” with at least 2 FAA-owned AWOS weather stations within each box. The observations are used for destination weather to any platform within that particular weather box.

The HSAC proposal is to also include the use of weather boxes created by privately-owned, FAA-commissioned AWOS’ when paired with any other FAA approved government or private weather station. Any privately-owned station would be subject to the same weather box approval criteria used in our current GOM plan: *“automatic 1-year provisional approval for new weather box(es) and if no discrepancy reports are received during the 1-year provisional period, then the weather box (es) will be automatically approved for permanent use signified by signed approval memo from NWS.”*

HSAC Chairman Pat Attaway submitted the proposal to include privately-owned FAA-commissioned AWOS’ into the GOM plan in a letter November 22, 2019. As the NWS lead for the GOM plan, I fully endorse the HSAC proposal. The provisional period for the five (5) currently operational privately-owned AWOS’ (KCYD, KJSL, KQT9, KGYF, KVQW) was effective as of November 23, 2019.

Sincerely,

*Paul G. Witsaman*

Paul G. Witsaman  
Regional Aviation Meteorologist

