

Big news and a big opportunity in Indiana:

250% increase in access to Indiana lakes

June 20, 2010, Ft. Wayne, IN -- The state of Indiana has agreed, in principle, to increase public seaplane access to Indiana waters by 250%.

Even more important, it appears that there is an opportunity to enact reasonable changes to existing regulations that could open many more Indiana waterways to seaplanes.

More needs to be done, and the seaplane community is being asked to help fund legal assistance to bring this about.

A major success for SPA and ISPA

The Seaplane Pilots Association, in conjunction with the Indiana Seaplane Pilots Association, has been working hard to increase access for seaplanes to Indiana's lakes and rivers. The state of Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has indicated its willingness to open 10 lakes in northern Indiana to public-use status for seaplanes, effective as soon as the appropriate changes can be made.

For over twelve years, Randy Strebbig, president of the Indiana Seaplane Pilots Association and Field Director for the national Seaplane Pilots Association, has worked single-handedly to convince the State of Indiana to relax its rules regarding seaplane use of public waters.

Since 1998, the state Department of Transportation (DOT) has interpreted its rules to prohibit seaplanes from landing on any lake without a certificated Seaplane Base (SPB.) There are only four public-use SPB's in the state, all in the southern half.

Mr. Strebbig, with the cooperation of the state DNR established seventeen private-use seaplane bases on northern Indiana lakes (all of which had histories of prior seaplane use.) For over eight years, these lakes have been effectively open to seaplane traffic, with prior permission from Mr. Strebbig.

The arrangement has effectively proven the safety and compatibility of seaplanes on Indiana lakes, but has led to the odd situation where a private individual must give permission for seaplanes to use public waters. Both the state of Indiana and Mr. Strebbig are working to resolve this in favor of more public access.

250% Increase in access

In a series of public and private meetings over the past year and a half, the seaplane community—under Mr. Strebbig's leadership—has convinced the DNR and DOT that the time has come to allow fair access for seaplanes to Indiana lakes. Initially, ten of the seventeen lakes will be converted to public-use seaplane base status, a 250% increase from the four existing public-use SPB's today.

The other seven lakes do not yet meet the regulatory requirements for establishing a seaplane base, but the DNR has granted a delay to allow time for regulatory changes that would allow access to these smaller lakes.

Even better, there is some chance that—with rules changes or a reinterpretation of current regulations—Indiana could join its neighbors like Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota in allowing seaplane operations on all waters where not otherwise specifically prohibited.

More work is needed

SPA and the Indiana Seaplane Pilots Association (ISPA) are potentially on the verge of a major victory for the seaplane community, but the work is not over.

ISPA has hired an aviation consultant familiar with Indiana aeronautical regulations to assist in the process of developing regulatory changes. The process will take time and funds, but the prospects are good for even more Indiana waters to be opened to seaplanes.

YOU can help

The Seaplane Pilots Association has set up a special Indiana Seaplane Access Fund through the SPA Foundation. Proceeds of the fund will be used to help pay for efforts to improve seaplane access to Indiana waterways.

The SPA Foundation is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization. Donations are tax-deductible to the maximum extent allowed by law.

To learn more, and to make a donation, visit the Indiana Seaplane Pilots Association website at www.indianaseaplanepilots.org

Media inquiries:

SPA Contact: James McManus, (888) SPA-8923

Indiana SPA Contact: Randy Strebig, M: (260) 424-5371