

# MT. TAMALPAIS HANG GLIDING RULES AND PROCEDURES (Revised February 2020)

Marin County Hang Gliding Association  
P.O. Box 785, Mill Valley, CA 94942

The Marin County Hang Gliding Association (MCHGA) is designated by the California State Park Service and the County of Marin Department of Open Space through special use permits to administer recreational hang gliding activities on Mt. Tamalpais. Commercial hang gliding activities are forbidden under these permits. Each pilot flying this site is expected to uphold and enforce the flying rules established for the site. Any pilot errors made while flying, such as endangering other pilots or spectators or destruction of government or private property, could result in revocation of the County or State use permits, with consequent loss of Mt. Tamalpais as a hang gliding site.

## 1. PILOT QUALIFICATIONS

- a. All pilots must be current members of the United States Hang Gliding & Paragliding Association (USHPA).
- b. Pilots must possess a minimum of a USHPA Intermediate (Hang III) level rating, or a USHPA Novice (Hang II) level rating **and be accompanied by a MCHGA-approved Mt. Tam instructor.**
- c. Pilots must have a current Mt. Tam sticker (Novices, see Novice Procedures) attached to the left side of their helmet in order to set up or fly a hang glider off Mt. Tam. The purpose of the helmet sticker is to identify qualified pilots to Park authorities and other pilots.

Stickers must be obtained in person. However, you may renew them by mail. To obtain a sticker, a pilot must: 1) present a current USHPA membership card; 2) complete and sign an application form; 3) read the Mt. Tamalpais Hang Gliding Rules and Policies; and 4) pay a sticker fee. In addition to the helmet sticker, pilots will receive a copy of the rules and the combination to the lock on the MCHGA box at Pan Toll (Combination #4142). Helmet stickers are currently available from: [stickers@mchga.org](mailto:stickers@mchga.org)

- d. All pilots must fly with a parachute.

## 2. NOVICE PROCEDURES

Novice pilots meeting all qualifications outlined above, complete an *Application* and pay a novice card fee. Novice cards must be in novice pilot's possession when flying Mt. Tam. Novice pilots **may only fly** Mt. Tamalpais on weekdays and non-holidays with an accompanying MCHGA-approved Mt. Tam Primary or Secondary Instructor.

- a. **Initial Flights:** The first flight and subsequent flights must be with a **Primary Instructor** until the instructor is satisfied that the pilot has demonstrated sufficient skills, judgement and knowledge to safely be sponsored by a Secondary Instructor and so signifies by signing off pilot's logbook. Instructor reviews Tam rules with novice pilot. Prior to first flight, both Instructor and Novice Pilot must visit and inspect the landing area. Before flying, both instructor and Novice pilot must sign in at Pantoll. At launch, Instructor discusses conditions, flightpath, etc., with novice. Novice pilot should launch before Instructor, but following other pilot(s). Subsequent to the flight, Instructor shall debrief pilot suggesting any improvement(s) in either flight plan or execution necessary.
- b. **Later Flights:** Once approved, the novice pilot may fly Mt. Tam sponsored by either a Primary or Secondary Instructor. Pilots must still be briefed, fly before, and be debriefed by their sponsoring Instructor.
- c. **Limitations:**
  - There can only be one novice pilot in the air at one time.
  - An instructor can sponsor a maximum of 2 novices per day by himself, however two instructors (at least one of which must be a Primary Instructor) working together may sponsor up to 5 novice pilots.
  - Radio communication is strongly advised.

Upon receiving a new Intermediate (Hang III) rating, the pilot may exchange his/her novice card for a Mt. Tam helmet sticker of the same calendar year, at no additional cost.

### 3. INSTRUCTOR QUALIFICATIONS:

There will be two classes of Mt. Tam Instructor as follows:

- a. **Primary Instructor:** Must be a current USHPA-certified Advanced Instructor or Basic Instructor/Observer and be approved by the MCHGA Mt. Tam Committee.
- b. **Secondary Instructor:** Must be an Advanced (Hang IV) pilot/Observer with advanced teaching experience, current knowledge and experience flying on Mt. Tam. Must have served an apprenticeship with one or more Primary Instructors, who will submit their recommendation(s) to the Mt. Tam Committee prior to the committee's approval or rejection of the candidate.

Instructor/Observers wishing to apply should contact MCHGA for an application. Approval of said Instructor/Observer will be based on his/her previous flying experience on Mt. Tam, and/or recommendations(s) to the Mt. Tam Committee from applicant's former Instructors.

### 4. BEFORE FLYING

Every flying day, pilots must sign in at the Pantoll Ranger Station once before their first flight of the day. The sign-in box is located on the east side of the kiosk, and is locked. The combination is 4142.

### 5. LAUNCHING

- a. The three designated take-off sites are shown on the attached map as 1, 2, and 3. All launches must be made from these sites **only** and should be witnessed.
- b. When winds are in excess of **15 mph**, an Advanced (Hang IV) pilot should be present for flying to continue.
- c. Pilots flying the site for the first time are required to get a site intro from a pilot who is experienced with the site.
- d. Launching from the back (north- or east-facing) side of any launch site is prohibited.
- e. Only five (5) gliders are allowed at any launch site at any one time. This includes all gliders in the set-up and launch areas, whether in or out of the glider bag.
- f. When the maximum number of pilots are at launch, pilots should be considerate of others who are waiting their turns to set up. If conditions are safely and consistently launchable, pilots who are set up should launch within 15 minutes of completing their set up procedure.

### 6. FLYING

- a. The **Restricted Flying Area**, indicated on the attached map, must be observed. **Do not** fly over the town or cliffs south of the town.
- b. There is to be no flying when the beach is not visible from take-off or when the cloud ceiling is dangerously low.
- c. There is to be no flying when the landing area is crowded with people, which is usually at the discretion of a State Park Ranger.
- d. **Motorized hang gliding is strictly forbidden.**
- e. No glider shall be flown in any manner which intentionally exceeds its manufacturer's maximum recommended (placard) limits, or exceeds a roll angle of 60 degrees or a pitch angle or 30 degrees while west of Highway 1.

## 7. LANDING ZONE

- a. The landing zone is on the beach at Walla Vista, as indicated on the attached map. All landings must be made in the **Designated Landing Zone** south of the Seadrift Beach. When working off excess altitude, work down over the beach or water, **not** directly over the houses along the beach.
- b. The first pilot in a group to land should keep the landing zone clear of spectators for the rest of the group. If spectators are not clear of the landing area, the pilot must be prepared to land further south on the beach in a less crowded area.
- c. Pilots must **walk** their gliders from the beach to waiting vehicles via the Walla Vista public access. All other roads in the area are private roads and are **not** to be used. Drivers should park along Calle del Arroyo in the area south of the Walla Vista alleyway.

## 8. PILOT RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. Pilots must comply with all State Park and County Beach regulations governing visitor use (parking, littering, overnight camping, etc.)
- b. Safety: Pilots are responsible for their own safety and the safety of other pilots and spectators. Each pilot is ultimately responsible for avoiding people in the landing area.
- c. Judgement: Good judgment is a necessary part of aviation. It requires a thorough knowledge of the limitations of your aircraft, your abilities, and the prevailing conditions (such as sufficient altitude and penetration to cross the houses, etc., and whether your chosen landing zone is dangerously crowded). When deciding whether you are going to fly, take all things into consideration.
- d. Self-Regulation: It is each pilot's responsibility to **uphold and enforce** these rules and to cooperate with Park Rangers. A pilot observing another pilot in violation of these rules is obliged to enforce the rules as follows:
  - i) Explain to pilot that he/she is in violation of the rules; request compliance.
  - ii) If unsuccessful in gaining compliance, politely inform pilot that you are obligated to report him/her to a Park Ranger if violation(s) of the rules continue.
  - iii) Report the pilot to any Park Ranger. If Rangers are not immediately available, contact Pan Toll at (415) 388-2070 or Ranger Dispatch at (916) 358-1300.
  - iv) Make a verbal report to a club officer.

A pilot violating rules or witnessing a violation without intervention will:

- Be issued a citation by Park Rangers
- Be subject to revocation of flying privileges at all sites regulated by MCHGA
- Risk losing his/her flying privileges at other USHPA-regulated sites.
- Risk losing his/her USHPA rating

## 9. SITE ADVISORIES

- a. In winter months, high tides can cover the landing area.
- b. Even though there might be light winds at launch, at times there are strong headwinds and laminar flow near the beach.
- c. In summer months, the landing area can be crowded (see rule 5-b). Please give spectators a wide margin, as they are not aware of our degree of control.
- d. Post-frontal conditions can be extremely turbulent.

## 10. EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

On the mountain, stop any State Park vehicle for assistance or contact Pan Toll Ranger Station at **(415) 388-2070** or Ranger Dispatch at **(916) 358-1300**. There is a public telephone at Pan Toll. When on the beach, use the Stinson Beach Fire Department emergency number, **(415) 868-1616**.

**PLEASE REMEMBER THAT FLYING MT. TAM IS OUR PRIVILEGE – NOT OUR RIGHT. USE COMMON SENSE AND SOUND JUDGMENT AND FLY SAFELY. GOOD LIFT!**

