

# MARIN COUNTY HANG GLIDING ASSOCIATION

## **Tam Airlines**

Spring Edition - Mar '24



### Newsletter Contents

**Pilots Corner** - Season Updates

**Club Communications / Renewals** - We're going digital!

**Safety & Advisories:** - Staying safe and site preservation

**Club Finances** - Balance Sheet Review

**Insurance Update:** Our largest expense

**Next Meetings** - Zoom or In-Person

## **Editor's Corner:**

Greetings, pilots! It's a pleasure to welcome you back to the latest edition of Tam Airlines. After a period of essential maintenance, we're thrilled to announce that Tam Airlines is back in the skies, better than ever. We've revamped our services to enhance your flying experience at Tam. So, buckle up, settle in, and get ready for an enjoyable journey. In this edition, we'll be diving into a variety of engaging topics and the latest happenings, all centered around our cherished site. Let's embark on this exciting adventure together!

The opportunity to engage in foot launch flying at Mt Tam is an extraordinary privilege for our pilot community. The rare blend of Mt Tam's pristine natural splendor, juxtaposed with its proximity to a world-class urban center, creates an unparalleled experience. This unique combination offers an unrivaled backdrop for pilots to enjoy the thrill of flight in a setting that is both breathtakingly wild and conveniently accessible.

We are all blessed and grateful to partake in flying activities at Mt Tam. It's important to remember that this opportunity is neither a right nor a guarantee. The continued access to this remarkable site hinges on our vigilant and dedicated efforts towards its preservation. We must be mindful and proactive in our approach to ensure that this incredible privilege remains available for future enjoyment.

The dedication and commitment of our members and club officers are the lifelines that keep us soaring at Mt Tam. Their significant time, effort, and personal sacrifices are pivotal to safeguarding our cherished site - ensuring that foot launch flying at Mt Tam continues for both present and future generations. The thought of a world without the option of flying at Mt Tam is unimaginable to me, as it probably is to you and to all the aspirational pilots eagerly awaiting their turn to take to the skies over Marin county..

*Lionel Marks*

MCHGA, Editor

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## **Pilots Corner:**

### Tis' the Season:

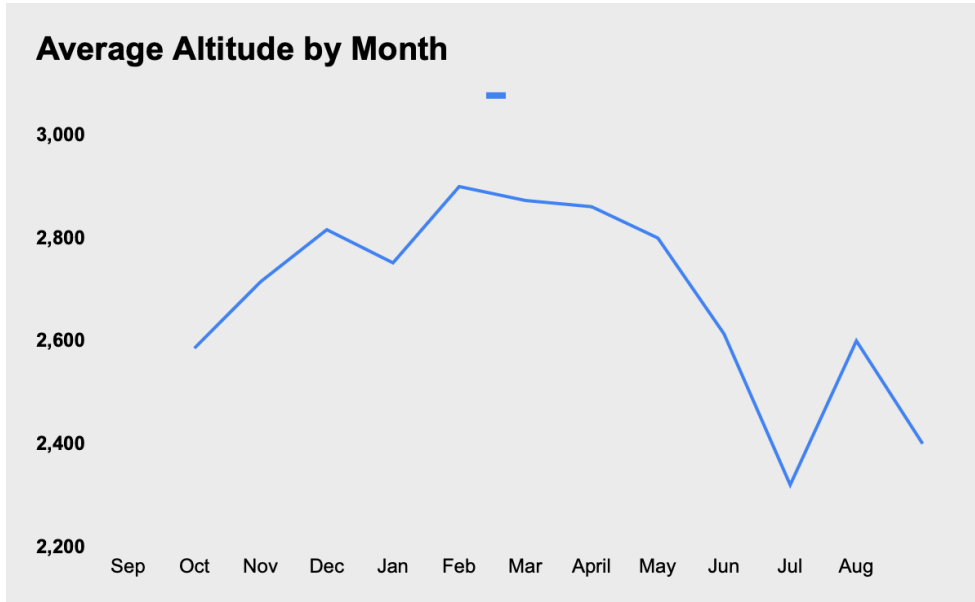
Winter and Spring are the prime seasons for experiencing reliable lift, with Fall flying also offering its share of impressive flights.. Historical data from the now-retired Tam soaring log reveals that Jan/Feb often yields the highest average elevation gains. This is attributed to robust storms that roll off the Gulf of Alaska which deposit cold Arctic air aloft.

This past winter has been particularly noteworthy, with several remarkable flights, many of which took place in late December and January, demonstrating the dynamic and rewarding nature of flying at Tam. Although Jan/Feb offers the highest average elevations, Spring brings by far the most consistent soaring conditions with a few ridiculous record altitude gains. *We hope you have epic Spring soaring conditions this year and are excited to see everyone get some lift!*

### Mt. Tam Soaring Log

The Tam Soaring log was officially retired after the 2022 season, a copy of the Tam soaring log continues to be available via the website. New tracking software and websites such as XContest.org have dramatically improved and simplified the compilation of flight data and statistics. The Tam Soaring Log predates many of the existing online tracking databases today and contains historical statistics that expose intriguing stats from the last 2 decades of flying MtTam.

## Mt Tam Soaring Log Summary



Top 13 Highest Flights '95-'22	
Date	Altitude in Feet
02/26/1996	6300
4/17/2006	5700
03/24/1995	5800
01/27/2002	5600
1/3/2004	5500
4/18/2003	5300
1/15/2006	5100
4/20/2007	5000
3/13/2010	4900
1/16/2012	4700
2/24/2017	4600
3/24/2005	4600
2/26/2011	4400

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## **Club Communications / Renewals:**

The Marin County Hang Gliding Association (MCHGA) is excited to announce a significant leap forward in how we connect with our community. We're augmenting the use of snail-mail, emails, SMS, and bulletin boards by embracing innovative communication channels and technologies to enhance pilot outreach and member interactions.

### Renewals

A key development for the 2024 season is the introduction of online renewals. This much-anticipated feature is now active and has received positive feedback from our current members. For now, this process is exclusive to existing members.

### Rating Requirements

An H3 or P3 (intermediate) rating is required to obtain a sticker to fly the site. All pilots are required to get a site intro before their first flight at Tam from an authorized sponsor listed on the website. Additionally, P3 pilots are required to have an authorized sponsor to observe their first flight, prior to receiving an official sticker.

### Telegram

MCHGA has traditionally relied on our website and email for advisories and community updates - a practice we will maintain to ensure all members stay informed - we're also now embracing Telegram. This platform has quickly become the preferred choice for free flight pilots throughout the world. The MCHGA club officers are now actively participating in the Tam Telegram group, ready to respond to queries and concerns about club policies, advisories, and to provide general guidance for visiting pilots. This approach marks a new chapter in our commitment to fostering a vibrant, well-informed, and connected Tam flying community.

### Sign-ins

Individual sign-ins are an essential aspect of membership responsibilities. This can present logistical challenges for pilots coming in from the North side of Mt. Tam. It has been suggested to

consider Digital Sign-ins as they have become the norm for many sites across the Bay Area. Mt. Tamalpais State park has historically denied requests to migrate to digital sign-ins. Given new e-sign state laws and turnover with Park staff, the club will revisit the possibility of introducing digital sign-ins. Sporadic Cell Service has been a major obstacle to its adoption in the past - more to come on this topic in future newsletters as we learn more.

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## **Safety & Advisories:**

Each member receives club rules for flying the site. Copies are available on <http://mchga.org> - Each wing type has separate [rules](#) due to the unique nature of flying Mt Tam for each wing type and historically based on previous dual club operations of MCHGA/BAPA which are now combined.

In addition to the club rules here are some important reminders of safety hazards and up-to-date advisories:

### The Seadrift Sign

A sign indicating the "Seadrift Property, Private Beach" is present to the north of the Walla Vista beach access steps. Please avoid landing north of the sign as this is considered a private beach. If you accidentally land north of the sign, do not linger and quickly make your way to the south of this sign to break down or recreate. The sign often washes away in winter, but the rule is still enforced by local authorities



### Beach Erosion and Tides

Winter brings large storms and potential hazards, with significant beach erosion leading to narrow if not completely absent beach. Always check the beach in the designated LZ area before launching. Narrower beaches force pedestrians and beach goers closer together leading to additional safety concerns upon landing.



### Walla Vista Access

The most recent storm has washed away a significant amount of beach, making it all but impossible for HG pilots to navigate their wings into the breakdown area. In this case breakdown on the beach south of the sign.

### Beach Safety

Warm weekends bring large crowds to Stinson beach. If you intend to fly on weekends pay close attention upon landing to avoid setting up your final into congested areas. This is especially true for HG pilots. It's better to

have a longer walk back to the breakdown area than to risk hitting beach goers.

### Reverse Gradients

Reverse gradients, where the wind speed increases closer to the ground, are common at Tam. Launches may have light to non-existent winds but strong on the beach. A good indication of this phenomenon is the presence of whitecaps of the ocean. If you have any concerns before launch consult with a seasoned Tam pilot in person or on Telegram.

### Other Hazards

Fishermen have been observed in our LZ area. High tides can force fishermen to move their fishing rods closer to the dunes with their fishing lines extending across the entire width of the beach. Look out for tall fishing rods with lines trawling into the ocean before landing.. If necessary land further south to avoid these hazards

## **Club Finances:**

The rising cost of insurance poses significant risk to MCHGA balance sheet. However thanks to aggressive financial prudence over the years MCHGA has accumulated a sizable treasury allowing it to

absorb the insurance premium increases in recent years. The annual net deficit is expected to continue for many years to come unless pilot sticker sales dramatically increase, sticker prices are raised or insurance premiums decrease ( least likely ).

MCHGA is committed to low sticker fees to ensure Mt Tam is accessible to pilots of all walks of life. From 2000-2016 sticker fees remained a modest \$15. From 2017-2023 they increased to \$20. Today they stand at \$25 to cover rising costs as membership declines. The club is passionate about offering membership at affordable prices, with shrinking membership it is ever more crucial to encourage your fellow pilots to renew, which will help distribute the costs across a larger pool of pilots.

## MCHGA P&L

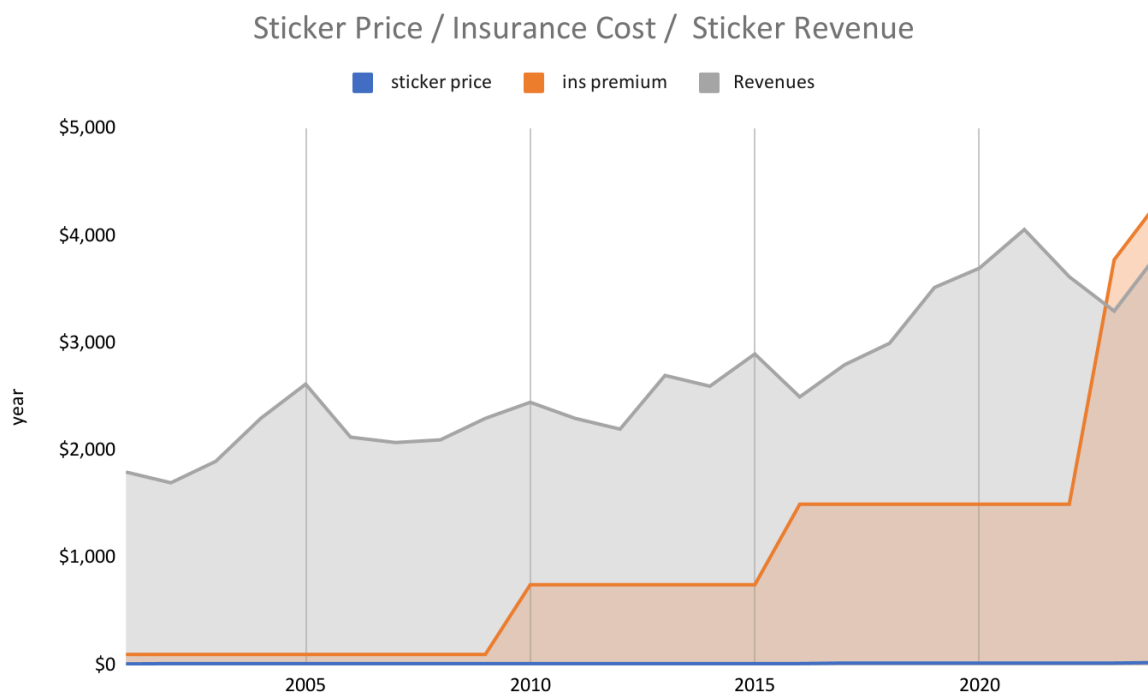
		2023	2024
<b>Starting Balance</b>		\$9,585	\$9,432
<b>Revenue FY</b>			Est for 2024
	MonoWing	\$2,900	\$3,375
	Wingual	\$420	\$480
	Donations	\$200	\$500
	USHPA Subsidy	\$1,100	\$255
Subtotal		<b>\$4,620</b>	<b>\$4,610</b>
<b>Expenses FY</b>			Est for 2024
	Insurance	\$3,778	\$4,329
	State park permit	\$375	\$400
	Club Activities	\$450	\$400
	Printing/Postage	\$100	\$100
	PO Box	\$216	\$225
	Webiste/Hosting	\$200	\$200
Subtotal		<b>\$5,119</b>	<b>\$5,654</b>
<b>Profit/Loss</b>		<b>-\$499</b>	<b>-\$1,044</b>
<b>Net Balance</b>		<b>\$9,086</b>	<b>\$8,388</b>



## Insurance Update:

Insurance has been the fastest growing expense, by far, compared to all other categories. The chart below highlights the magnitude of these increases, dwarfing sticker income in recent years. This trend highlights the significant threat insurance costs pose to supporting the clubs finances.

Compounded with shrinking membership, these trends could potentially foreshadow a deficit spiral that will demand creative solutions with both the RRG/USHPA and the membership. Our goal is to minimize the financial burden on membership and avert due increases which may lead to lower membership over time. Generous donations can help close the gap but we are hopeful to not depend entirely on individual contributions.



**Next Meetings:**

The club is currently holding two meetings per month: one in person, and one on Zoom. The in-person meetings are held on the *first* Thursday of each month, and the Zoom meetings on the *last* Thursday of each month. If you would like to attend a meeting, either online or in person, please RSVP to [info@mchga.org](mailto:info@mchga.org) by the day before the meeting. All are welcomed and encouraged to join, even for non-members.

**Next Newsletter**

What would you like to see in the next newsletter?

Have a flight story to share?

Topics to be covered?

*Feel free to drop us a line at [editor@mchga.org](mailto:editor@mchga.org)*