

GOVERNMENT/INDUSTRY AERONAUTICAL CHARTING FORUM 07-02 Charting Group

October 24-25, 2007

RECOMMENDATION DOCUMENT

FAA Control # 02-07-204

Subject: Continued Charting of “CLOSED Indefinitely” Airports

Background/Discussion:

Some US airports have been closed for up to several years, with little or no chance that they will ever reopen; yet their “indefinite” closure status – as opposed to permanent or UFN closure, or abandonment – causes them to continue to appear on both VFR and IFR charts and in airborne navigation databases; and their instrument approach procedures, if any, continue to be included – and still appear to be valid – in the paper and electronic versions of TPP charts. Airpark South, 2K2, at Ozark, Missouri, is a case in point.

Even though this airport has been closed going on two years and, due to industrial and residential development surrounding it, likely will never be reopened, the airport is nonetheless still charted in a way that could easily lead a pilot to believe that it is still open and operating. Even the current US Low Altitude Enroute chart displays a blue symbol for this airport, indicating that it still has a DOD-approved instrument approach procedure available for use.

In an cautionary or emergency situation occurring near such an airport, but with that airport not having been declared and analyzed as a destination or alternate during the preflight briefing process, a pilot could reasonably assume that such an airport would be a good – and perhaps the only available – diversionary or emergency landing point, when in fact it is closed and possibly hazardous even for emergency use. (A full VFR briefing from FSS for 2K2 reports “No significant NOTAMs,” with no mention of closure.)

Recommendation:

Search the NFDD for the phrase “CLOSED Indefinitely” and equivalent abbreviations and contractions (e.g., “Clsd. Indef.”), to identify those airports that have been closed for an extended period of time and/or are not planned or not likely to be reopened in the near or intermediate future - if at all.

Modify the current charting policy and procedure to cause removal of these airports from IFR and VFR charts and from airborne navigation databases; or otherwise clearly indicate on the charts and in the navigation databases that these airports are closed and that their instrument approach procedures are not authorized for IFR use.

Submitted by: Mark Ingram
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Date: 10-25-2007

MEETING 07-02: Mark Ingram, ALPA, briefed this issue. Some U.S. airports have been closed or abandoned for several years and will likely never reopen; yet their status is classified as “Closed Indefinitely” or “Closed Until Further Notice (UFN)”. The result is they are still shown on aeronautical charts, publications and databases. This can be potentially misleading for pilots.

When hard-surfaced airfields are classified as “Closed Permanently” they are listed as “NAME (CLOSED)” with the airport data removed. When they are listed as “Abandoned”, the airports are either removed from publication or they remain on Visual charts with an X-ed out airport symbol if they have landmark value.

The recommendation is to modify current procedures and policies to result in removal of these abandoned airports from charts, publications and databases.

Brad Rush, NFPO, commented that if the airport has an existing procedure still published, then it couldn't be removed.

NFDC agreed to run an airport listing for “Closed Indefinitely” and “Closed UFN” airports and provide that list to Brad Rush. Mr. Ingram would like to know how many airports are on that list.

MEETING 08-01: Mark Ingram, ALPA, recapped the issue for the forum. Mr. George Sempeles, FAA/NFDC mentioned the landmark value aspect of abandoned or closed airports on visual charts. Mr. Ingram responded by saying that the A/FD may indicate Closed UFN, when it's obvious that the airport will never reopen. Jay Jackson, FAA/NACO/Visual Team, commented that they are now using ortho-imagery as source data. Cartographers can more easily evaluate if a closed airport has landmark value.

Visual will be more proactive in using this new source. Visual has new server and more data will be available soon. Mr. Sempeles agreed to provide the airport list to Mr. Jackson and Brad Rush FAA/NFPO. The controlling agency or owner uses FAA Form 7480-1 to close an airport. If there are procedures associated with the airport, these procedures will be N/A'd. Additional issues need to be addressed before closing this issue.

ACTION: Affected branches of the FAA will review the subject and report back.

MEETING 08-02: Mr. John Moore, FAA/NACO, recapped the issue for the forum. Mr. Mark Ingram, ALPA, gave the example of Air Park South in Ozark, MO. The airport has been closed for 3 years yet remains in the A/FD and on the Kansas City Sectional. Mr. Brad Rush, FAA/NFPO, stated that State Aviation Departments have to officially close the airport to get it out of the FAA's system, although the FAA may have already taken action to remove or cancel related flight procedures.

Editorial Note: The following was received from Mr. George Sempeles, after the ACF: NFDC prepared NASR report of airports/heliports with the status of "Closed Indefinitely" and similar variable "CLSD UFN". Report was sent to Brad Rush of NFPO to insure instrument procedures in to such facilities are N/A'd.

ACTION: Mr. Greg Pray, FAA/NFDC to report at the next ACF.

MEETING 09-01: Mr. John Moore, FAA/NACO, recapped the issue for the forum. Mr. EC Hunnicutt, FAA/Airports Office, is working with Mr. George Sempeles, FAA/NFDC, concerning the issue and will provide information at the next ACF.

ACTION: Mr. E.C. Hunnicutt will report on the status at the next ACF.

MEETING 09-02: Mr. John Moore, FAA/AeroNav Services, recapped the issue for the forum. Mr. EC Hunnicutt, FAA/Airports Office, received a listing of “closed indefinitely” airports from Mr. Chris Criswell, FAA/NFDC, but has not had the time or staffing to take any action. Mr. Brad Rush, FAA/AeroNav Services confirmed that there were no existing procedures at any of these airports.

ACTION: Mr. E.C. Hunnicutt will report on the status at the next ACF.

MEETING 10-01: Mr. Henry Felices, FAA/AAS-100, reported there was some difficulty in the reporting process because of the differences in rules for public airports vs. private airports but that GCR has been contracted to assist with the tracking of the airports closed indefinitely.

Mr. Richard Boll, NBAA, noted that deficiencies in reporting airport closures status can be illustrated by the comparison of us government VFR aeronautical chart with the "not-for-navigation" Missouri state aeronautical chart regarding the airport in question, 2k2, where the state-issued chart does not depict the airport nor the associated airspace. Mr. Boll asked how long can closed indefinitely be and agreed with Mr. Brad Rush, FAA/AeroNav, that there should be a policy in place to give airports a timeline to report back.

Ms. Valerie Watson, FAA/AeroNav, commented that only airports “closed permanently” can be removed from charts.

ACTION: Mr. Henry Felices will report on the status of “Closed Indefinitely”.

MEETING 10-02: Mr. Henry Felices, FAA/AAS-100 was unable to attend. Mr. Moore, FAA/AJV-3B, briefed that Mr. Felices had sent him an email with the following information: Mr. Felices has a 5 year contract with GCR that specifically addresses private use landing areas closed indefinitely and an annual grant with GCR & Associates that specifically addresses public use landing areas that are closed indefinitely. Mr. Felices noted this issue is trickier with public use landing areas. Mr. Felices believes this issue is addressed as far as he can take it within the legal limits of the FAA and wishes to close the item.

Mark Ingram, ALPA, expressed concern that even with the data if they are not able to remove the airports from the charts there is still a possibility of an accident.

Mr. Brad Rush, FAA-AJV-3B, asked if we can label the airport closed indefinitely on charts if it is labeled so in the A/FD. Ms. Valerie Watson pointed out that the visual charts are 6 months products and as the “closed indefinitely” status of an airport can be lifted immediately via NOTAM, the incorrect status could well remain charted for 6 months. Additionally, she pointed out that “closed indefinitely” does not show up in FMS databases. Mr. Ted Thompson, Jeppesen, said the onus should be on the Airports

Office to fix it. Ms. Watson and Mr. Ingram suggested the possibility of another category to chart airports closed indefinitely to accommodate chart users and airport owners. Mr. Bill Hammett, FAA/AFS-420(ISI), suggested that one option would be to require airports set specific time limits on runway closures vice using the term UFN, similar to that required of the NOTAM system. If the time limit is exceeded, generate another notice.

Mr. Hammett added that the term UFN is being phased out of use in the U.S. and ICAO NOTAMs. Mr. Tom Schneider, FAA/AFS-420, suggested that the ACF pass this safety issue to the Airport Obstruction & Safety Committee (AOSC) led by Mr. Bob Bonanni.

AOSC Website:

http://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/arc/programs/aosc/

ACTION: Mr. John Moore will discuss this with AOSC and report back at the next ACF.

MEETING 11-01: Mr. Moore, FAA/AJV-3B, briefed that Mr. Bonanni had informed him that the Airport Obstruction and Safety Committee (AOSC) is not responsible for airport “closed indefinitely”. Mr. Henry Felices, FAA/AAS-100, agreed that the Office of Airports is responsible for overseeing the information.

Mr. Felices reported that there are 5400 to 5500 public-use airports and that 22 of these have been identified as closed indefinitely. Of the 14,500 private-use airports, Mr. Felices estimated that about 20 were closed indefinitely. Mr. Felices went on to state that part of a State inspector’s ‘ticket’ of actions is to report airport status for both public and private airports.

Valerie Watson, AJV-3B, stated that as private-use airports are depicted on visual charts at the Visual Charting Team’s discretion, they could be removed from the charts immediately, leaving only the 22 public-use airports as an outstanding issue.

Mr. Chris Criswell, FAA/AJR-32, offered to assist the Airports division in contacting airport managers of the 22 public-use airports currently listed as closed indefinitely.

ACTION: Mr. Chris Criswell, FAA/AJR-32, to get in touch with airport managers of 22 public airports listed as closed indefinitely.

ACTION: Mr. Felices, FAA/AAS-100, to report back at the next ACF.

MEETING 11-02: Mr. Henry Felices, FAA/AAS-100, was not able to attend the ACF, so Mr. John Moore, FAA/AJV-3B, briefed on behalf of Mr. Felices. Mr. Moore reported that there were 13 public-use airports within the contiguous U.S. that were “closed indefinitely”. Mr. Moore outlined the process in place within the FAA and the contractor responsible for review and providing information for the FAA to update its databases. It was noted that the contractor does not have the authority to officially remove the airports from FAA files and publications.

Mr. Rich Boll, NBAA, offered to take the list of 13 remaining airports and attempt to contact the owners, unofficially and offline, as a personal effort toward closure of the issue.

STATUS: CLOSED