



## Fifteen Years Sport Pilot's timeline

*Tom Poberezny, President*

**F**ifteen years—that's how long it will take for the sport pilot movement to reach maturity and have its greatest impact on aviation. That may seem like a long time, but when you consider the potential benefit, it's worth it.

EAA invested much time and effort championing the sport pilot/light-sport aircraft (SP/LSA) regulation. Our goal was to lower the barriers of time and money that keep people from taking the first steps to learn to fly.

As with any effort, expectations of what SP/LSA's success will look like can vary. Some people might expect thousands of new sport pilots by now, while others may feel the number should be much higher. The reality is more than 2,080 sport pilot certificates have been issued since the regulation went into effect. That's significant, especially when you consider that number does not include current pilots who have elected to fly as sport pilots. There's no way to track that number accurately.

The sport pilot regulation makes it easier for new pilots to take that first step to pilot certification... and then make a choice whether they wish to advance. It also allows existing pilots to extend their flying years, giving them the option to fly aircraft that may be more economical to operate, while at the same time reducing the requirements for them to remain active.

The light-sport aircraft category serves the entire pilot population, not just sport pilots. The LSA category offers the opportunity for any pilot to

own a new airplane at more affordable prices. Many pilots are concerned that prices of new, ready-to-fly special light-sport aircraft (S-LSA) are still too high. Some are higher priced than we'd hoped; however, many factors affect those prices. The current value of the U.S. dollar overseas is one factor. More than 50 S-LSA are currently available, with the majority of them produced by foreign manufacturers eager to enter the U.S. market. Some

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LSA manufacturers have significant production runs, while others are small-scale operations. Economies of scale, as well as the exchange rate, affect prices.

The real opportunity to bring more affordable aircraft into the marketplace will happen once more LSA enter the training market, which will occur when the Cessna SkyCatcher and Cirrus SR Sport become available. Historically, training schools buy new airplanes, use them for a few years, and then release them into the used airplane market at reduced prices.

That will happen with S-LSA, too. But we're not there yet. As I've said before, the implementation of the sport pilot/light-sport aircraft movement is a marathon, not a sprint. It breaks down into three distinct phases:

- In Phase 1, the first five years, considerable time and effort has been dedicated to developing the infrastructure for people to participate as sport pilots, particularly the training network. In addition, the LSA industry has developed and grown. Many of the first LSA were aircraft that already existed and were adapted to the rules. Now, we're beginning to see new aircraft entering the market that have been designed specifically to the ASTM International standards that govern LSA design, manufacture, and production.

- In Phase 2, years five to 10, the sport pilot population will increase and the training market will reach a significant level. More new LSA will enter the market, incorporating the latest in technological advances, while some aircraft will start making their way into the used aircraft market.

- In Phase 3, years 10 to 15, the full impact of the sport pilot certificate will be felt as pilot numbers grow, bringing more pilots into aviation and extending the active time of current pilots. As the pilot population increases, the demand for more aircraft will increase as well.

EAA is committed to insuring the viability and vitality of recreational flying. The sport pilot/light-sport aircraft initiative is just one example of EAA's investment in the future. 