



Federal Aviation
Administration

Questions and Answers

UAS Test Site Selection

March 2012

Q. What did Congress tell the FAA to do in selecting the UAS test sites?

A. Two very similar laws – the National Defense Authorization Act and the FAA reauthorization -- direct the FAA to establish a program that will integrate unmanned aircraft systems into the national airspace system (NAS) at six test ranges. Both laws also contain a spectrum of issues the program should address, such as considering both civil and public UAS, developing certification and air traffic requirements and coordinating the program with the FAA NextGen efforts.

Q. What's the main goal of the test site program?

A. The research done at the test sites will help the FAA develop regulatory standards to foster UAS technology and operational procedures. The effort also will add to the data we need to eventually permit routine UAS operations in the NAS.

Q. How will the FAA choose the six test sites?

A. Our *Federal Register* notice asks for public comment on a number of questions to help develop UAS test site requirements, designation standards and oversight activity. The agency also will seek input from NASA and the Department of Defense before starting a formal competitive selection process to take advantage of their expertise in establishing the test sites.

Q. What criteria must a UAS research center meet to be considered?

A. The Congressional mandate states the FAA must consider "geographic and climatic diversity" and "the location of ground infrastructure and research needs." In the Request for Comments, we suggest additional criteria and solicit public input whether these need to be modified or added to. We will carefully review and consider the feedback provided in developing our actual solicitation.

Q. What is the timeline for selecting the test sites?

A. We expect to make the selections late in 2012 and for the first site to be operational in 2013.

Q. Has the FAA identified any potential sites for the six test ranges?

A. We have not identified any additional sites yet. The FAA currently has one test site at New Mexico State University, which became operational in June 2011.

Q. How much money is in the FAA budget for the UAS test sites?

A. The Defense and FAA reauthorizations do not provide any funding for these test sites.

Q. Will all the test sites have the same parameters?

A. The FAA does not believe the planned test sites need to be identical. It is possible that the size of the sites as well as the research work performed will vary from site to site.

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