Contra Costa County Opens New Airport

On October 8, 1994, Contra Costa County will be celebrating the opening and dedication of the new Byron Airport near Byron, California. The twenty million dollar project (located between the cities of Antioch and Tracy, California) is the newest airport in the State of California and one of only four new airports in the United States. The opening also coincides with California’s Aviation and Aerospace week established by Governor Pete Wilson.

Throughout the day, the airport has a number of activities planned to entertain those attending the dedication. At 11:00 a.m. there will be a Three Mile Fun Run, for runners, walkers, and rollers of all ages on the new runways and taxiways. Twelve o’clock noon, marks the start of the formal airport dedication and ribbon cutting ceremonies. It is expected that representatives from the Federal Aviation Administration, Governor’s Office, CALTRANS, local politicians and airport tenants will participate in the formal dedication. Immediately following the dedication the airport will host an airport open house with static displays of military, civilian and experimental aircraft, skydiving demonstrations, military and civilian fly-bys, aerobatic demonstrations, an art contest for local grade schools and several other entertaining activities. Those who attend the event will have the opportunity to leave a lasting impression by inscribing their name, initials, hand prints or whatever they choose in freshly poured cement blocks. These blocks will then be arranged around the flagpole to be viewed by future guests of the airport. All are welcome to attend and help celebrate this fulfilled event.

The dedication culminates twenty years of planning and construction of a new airport. Contra Costa County started looking for a site for the new airport in the year 1975. This new airport was needed to meet the general aviation needs of the rapidly growing East Contra Costa County. In 1984, Hodges & Shutt Aviation Planning Services of Santa Rosa, California conducted a fourth and final study selecting Byron as the site. Hodges & Shutt also completed all the planning and design of the new airport. On June 4, 1986, the County Board of Supervisors approved the East County Airport Master Plan and authorized Harold E. Wight, Manager of Airports, to apply for funding from the Federal Aviation Administration. This paved the way for the new Byron Airport.

The airport will serve as a reliever for the major air carriers and larger general aviation facilities in the San Francisco-Oakland-Stockton Area. At present, the primary runway (12/30) is built to a length of 4,500 feet by 100 feet wide, with the capability of being extended to 6,000 feet. The secondary runway (5/23) has been built to a length of 3,000 feet by 75 feet wide and can be extended an additional 900 feet. Parking and storage for over 200 aircraft and an airport administration building are under construction. Hangars from the existing Byron Airport will be moved to the new airport in the near future. Also included are parallel taxiways, aircraft aprons, drainage facilities, a fire fighting water supply system and access roads.

A number of obstacles were hurdled in the planning and construction of the airport. Seasonal wetlands and vernal pools were on the site and had to be mitigated. A cattle watering

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