

## White House Recognizes North Dakota Drone Effort

August 8, 2016



(TNS) — WASHINGTON, D.C. — Accomplishments made with unmanned aircraft systems in North Dakota were recognized recently during a workshop hosted on the White House campus.

The "Workshop on Drones and the Future of Aviation" assembled leaders from areas of industry, academia and government to outline the future of integrating unmanned aircraft, also known as drones, into the national airspace and discuss necessary policies to ensure that happens, according to a news release.

"Recognizing the fact that North Dakota as a test site is helping to pave the way for regulations really solidifies the reason why it was important that we were there," said Nicholas Flom, director of safety for the Northern Plains UAS Test Site, who attended the workshop.

The North Dakota test site is one of six designated by the Federal Aviation Administration to conduct research into drones' airspace integration.

The test site received recognition for requesting permission to fly drones beyond the line of visual sight at the Grand Sky business park on Grand Forks Air Force Base.

The test site is seeking to fly the aircraft up to 29,000 feet above ground without the use of chase planes. These planes are tasked with tailing a drone during flights beyond the sight of the drone's pilot, which is otherwise prohibited.

Another effort highlighted was the test site's success in securing a block of spectrum from the Federal Communications Commission for transmitting commands and data during drone flights. Accessing spectrum is an increasingly challenging feat nationwide, Flom said.

"Spectrum is not readily available throughout the country," he said. "One of the things they were discussing was airspace might be a challenge to get, but what we're finding is dedicated spectrum is even more difficult."

Spectrum will play a large role in beyond-line-of-sight commercial drone flights, which could utilize secure transmission bands for their control systems.

## **Next steps**

Flying beyond the line of visual sight — along with accompanying sense and avoid technology — is considered by many in the industry as the next significant step needed to fully integrate commercial drones into the national airspace.

"Safely integrating drones into our airspace is one of the FAA's top priorities, and we're determined to get it right," Michael Huerta, administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration, told the workshop crowd. "It's essential for our economy and our role as a global aviation leader."

Also speaking were representatives from the U.S. Department of the Interior, Intel, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Edison Electric Institute.

The Edison Electric Institute, which represents all U.S. investor-owned electric companies, highlighted its work with Sharper Shape, an aerial inspection company with a research office in North Dakota.

Sharper Shape and EEI announced a partnership in March that will work to develop capabilities for beyond-line-of-sight flights for electrical companies to use to inspect infrastructure. Part of that will include seeking approval to bring a beyond-line-of-sight demonstration to the FAA.

"That was a great plug for a North Dakota company doing great things," Flom said.

The workshop was co-hosted by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and the Association of Unmanned Vehicle Systems International Foundation.

In addition to Flom and other test site representatives, stakeholders from organizations such as Trumbull Unmanned, Lockheed Martin, Google and the Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership were present.

The workshop comes a few weeks prior to the effective date of new federal regulations for commercial and governmental drone use. The rules, known as Part 107, will be implemented Aug. 29.

"The White House has really not been involved with this but, now that we have set rules, they wanted to learn as much as possible," Flom said.

©2016 the Grand Forks Herald (Grand Forks, N.D.) Distributed by [Tribune Content Agency, LLC](#).

<http://www.govtech.com/public-safety/White-House-Recognizes-North-Dakota-Drone-Effort.html>