



NEWS RELEASE

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\$1.7 MILLION AGREEMENT SUPPORTS MULTI-AGENCY EFFORT TO EVALUATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AVIAN RADAR SYSTEMS AT AIRPORTS

WASHINGTON, Jan. 14, 2010--The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) recently entered into a \$1.7 million cooperative agreement with researchers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to evaluate the effectiveness of avian radars at airports.

The effort brings together experts in wildlife biology, ornithology, radar, and system integration from government, industry and academia to evaluate the MERLIN Avian Radar System by DeTect, Inc.--one of several radar systems used to detect birds at and near airports. In particular, USDA researchers will be working with colleagues from the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), Indiana State University and Purdue University.

“The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s wildlife services (WS) program and the FAA have long history of working together to address wildlife hazards to aviation,” said Mike Begier, national coordinator for the WS airport wildlife hazards program. “This research will build upon existing efforts to create a safer flying environment for the public.”

The assessment effort is part of the FAA’s overall investigation of the effectiveness of commercially available avian radar detection systems at U.S. civil airports when used in conjunction with other known wildlife management and control techniques. Though it is well established that radar can detect wild birds, there is little published information concerning the accuracy and detection capabilities related to range, altitude, target size and effects of weather for avian radar systems.

USDA researchers from the National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) will lead the effort to conduct 1) a technical evaluation of the candidate radar system, including sensor components and associated data delivery systems, 2) field evaluations of system accuracy using remote controlled aircraft and radio-marked wild birds, 3) an assessment of the integration radar technology with other, more traditional aspects of wildlife hazard management at airports and 4) behavioral study on the potential effects of radar energy on bird behavior. Information gathered from these studies might contribute to the development of future wildlife hazard mitigation guidelines as part of an integrated wildlife hazards management approach at civilian and military airports across the country.

WS is a program within USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, which provides wildlife management services to more than 60 percent of the Nation’s civil airports and maintains the national wildlife strike database for the FAA. Since WS began maintaining

records in 1990, more than 94,000 wildlife collisions (strikes) with civil aircraft have been reported. Wildlife collisions with aircraft cost U.S. civil aviation \$625 million and U.S. military aviation more than \$100 million annually and pose a serious safety risk.

The NWRC is the research arm of the WS program. The Center applies scientific expertise to the development of practical methods to resolve human-wildlife conflicts and to maintain the quality of the environments shared with wildlife. To learn more about NWRC, visit its Web site at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ws/nwrc>.

FAA's mission is to provide the safest, most efficient aerospace system in the world.

NCAR is a federally funded research and development center devoted to service, research and education in the atmospheric and related sciences. Its mission is to understand the behavior of the atmosphere and related physical, biological, and social systems; to support, enhance and extend the capabilities of the university community and the broader scientific community, nationally and internationally; and to foster the transfer of knowledge and technology in support of these goals.

Mention of any company name or product does not constitute endorsement by the FAA, USDA or NCAR.

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