



# BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF INYO

P. O. DRAWER N • INDEPENDENCE, CALIFORNIA 93526

TELEPHONE (760) 878-0373

e-mail: [cquilter@inyocounty.us](mailto:cquilter@inyocounty.us)

e-mail: [dellis@inyocounty.us](mailto:dellis@inyocounty.us)



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 6, 2019

## FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Clint G. Quilter, County Administrator  
(760) 878-0292

### FAA RECOGNIZES INYO COUNTY, TOWN OF MAMMOTH FOR PARTNERSHIP ON REGIONAL AIR SERVICE

The County of Inyo and Town of Mammoth Lakes were recognized this week with the Federal Aviation Administration's Herman C. Bliss Airports Partnership Award. The award was presented by FAA Associate Administrator for Airports Kirk Schaeffer and FAA Western-Pacific Region Director Mark A. McClardy during the FAA Western-Pacific Region 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Airports Conference in Torrance on June 4.

The Herman C. Bliss Airports Partnership Award, created in 2005 to recognize the service of long-time FAA Western Region Airport Division Manager Mr. Herman C. Bliss, is awarded to an airport, a consultant, a state or local government employee, or organization that has provided unparalleled leadership in at least one of the following areas:

- Developed and/or implemented specific programs or activities resulting in enhanced airport/ aviation safety;
- Performed outstanding and/or unique accomplishments, directly linked to airport/aviation safety, or in support of airports programs;
- Developed/implemented other noteworthy accomplishments that have provided substantial benefit to aviation within the Western Region.

Inyo County and Mammoth Lakes received the award "in recognition of the important partnership developed between these organizations to cooperatively develop their respective airports and to develop a regional solution to the aviation needs of California's Eastern Sierra Region."

Accepting the prestigious honor on behalf of the County and Town were Inyo County Public Works Director Mike Errante and Associate Engineer Ashley Helms, part of a key group of Inyo County employees – along with the Board of Supervisors and current County Administrator and former Public Works Director Clint Quilter – that has been instrumental in moving the County closer to introducing commercial air service to the Bishop Airport by late 2020.

The ultimate goal is to bring stability to regional commercial air service for the benefit of all Eastern Sierra communities and their resident-travelers and visitors.

Chief to achieving this goal has been forming an alliance with the Town of Mammoth Lakes over the past few years in which both Mammoth and the County have adopted a non-competitive attitude, focusing instead on their individual facility needs with an eye toward expanding and improving service on a regional scale.

This cooperative relationship has obviously not gone unnoticed by the FAA or McClardy, who have been a champion of a regional approach in Inyo and Mono counties for quite some time.

"Reliable commercial air service is critical to our economy and quality of life in the Eastern Sierra," said Inyo County Supervisor Jeff Griffiths, whose district includes the Bishop Airport. "Developing a regional solution has taken

tremendous cooperation and trust from not only the Town of Mammoth Lakes and Inyo County, but also Bishop, Mono County, and our private sector partners. I am proud that we have been recognized with this high award."

The FAA has long supported the County's efforts to improve the Bishop Airport with approximately \$15 million in grant funding thus far to help cover the costs of various improvement projects, which, according to Public Works staff, have been focused on lighting and runway repairs for the most part.

Under the direction of Errante, Helms has recently taken the lead on a \$7.85 million runway pavement improvement project at the Bishop Airport that is being funded by an Airport Improvement Program grant administered by the FAA. The grant funding was awarded in May and does not require a match from the County.

The facility overall has many attributes working in its favor, including significant acreage (895), lack of airspace constraints, minimal crosswinds/wind issues, wide runways (150 feet), long runways (7,500 feet), two federal NAVAIDS on site, three separate runways, unlimited runway lateral clearance and night use, no limit to runway directional use, and the ability to host a variety of aircraft.

The County continues working toward achieving Part 139 Certification in order to accept commercial flights, and, in cooperation with regional partners, has identified an airline that is now in talks with the FAA. Helms said the County is still on track for commercial flights by fall or winter of 2020. Additional public outreach is planned in the interim.

###