

Geotextile consideration

The runway is the center point of any model airplane field. Without an adequate runway for the desired types of aircraft, the membership will eventually decline or not grow. The other structures at the field are secondary. I am surprised that the club is willing to improve the structures but may not be willing to improve the runway, which is the main consideration for new/existing members. Everyone knows that the majority of the modern RC aircraft are smaller and lighter. Many of those aircraft do not perform well from grass. I have several airplanes that can't be flown off the grass due to smaller tires or the damage to retractable gear that is caused upon landing, by the friction/braking action of the grass.

The members are the lifeblood of the club. The main reason that I personally joined TCRCM is because I felt welcome by the general membership. There are members that have plugged in and made TCRCM a club instead of just a facility. Without those members (many of which support a move to improve the runway), my existence at the club would be questionable. I was previously a member of MAA which, wasn't as much of a club as it was a facility. Having said that, I miss the smooth surface runways (I don't miss the black top, just the smooth surface). The model airplane world opens up with a smooth surface, with more enjoyable takeoffs, landings and touch and goes. The fun factor goes way up with a smooth surface runway!

I appreciate all the members that work hard to maintain the field. The Geotextile discussion is not about the quality or level of care of the grass runway as much as it is about what types of models work off the grass.

I have seen many members struggle with the grass field, causing damaged landing gear and flip overs. Unless you only fly large aircraft or without landing gear, your airplane will probably experience the same. The model airplane journey for some, may someday include a larger airplane that works on the grass but certainly not everyone will or has taken that path.

For those that say the grass is fine- consider that a grass runway will still be there. My understanding is that the Geotextile proposal will leave a wider strip of grass than the Geotextile width. Having both grass and Geotextile would provide a choice of runway.

I have taken off and landed around grass potholes in the center section of the runway for over a year now, with that section of the runway being mostly unusable. I can envision that the grass could have similar issues in the future outside of anyones control. With Geotextile, the grass not having been freshly mowed or having dead spots will never be an issue.

Many know that I have gravitated towards EDF jets. There are many jets that I would like to fly at TCRCM that will not work off grass (I currently have three that won't work on the TCRCM grass). I know there are others in the club that have similar issues. When I peruse the RC websites now for my next airplane adventure, it's an ever present concern and knocks the majority of airplane options off the table.

Some people find it difficult to line up on the current grass runway and sometimes end up in the deep grass. The Geotextile would provide a contrasting target with the surrounding grass. This would provide pilots with a better, more distinct target to shoot for when landing and ultimately improve pilot skill. A runway center stripe would make it even better- simulating a full scale airport runway. Now that would be cool!

In my scanning of the internet, clubs that have installed Geotextile do not seem to have a problem with membership. The Golden Eagles club in Arizona told me that I'd be hard pressed

to find someone that didn't like their Geotextile! The Fly-A-Ways club in Oregon (with Geotextile) has 200 members (capped at 200!) and their dues are only \$70/year. It appears that their Geotextile may be 10 plus years old, although I haven't received an answer from them yet.

Many of us spend quite a sum of money on the hobby every year and to have a premium field to fly most any type of model from, is invaluable. Cost should not be the deciding factor. No guarantees but several members have told me that they would be willing to make large sum contributions to help pay for it and it's likely that the club can get a grant from the city and one from AMA next year. Some of us have discussed having fund raising events to put money into the club coffers as well. I don't think paying for it will be an issue.

I asked a member of the Golden Eagles club in Arizona if the Geotextile gave them any issues as far as traction is concerned. He indicated that it hasn't been a concern for them. As far as landing rollouts, the grass would still be available for those that are concerned about that or desire a grass landing. The textile to grass transitions would also be maintained for overruns. Brakes or ESC reversing can also be added to models. It would be a win for the club in general, as members could land/takeoff on grass or Geotextile.

Relevant information from the Wasatch Aero Modelers:

“Advantages of a Geotextile Runway.

- User friendly to all aircraft – Micro to 100cc – Electric, Nitro, Gas.
- User friendly to aircraft with retractable gear.
- Warbirds and EDF's can operate off of it.
- No longer have to put larger wheels on smaller aircraft.
- Less chance of nosing over and breaking propellers.
- Friendly to monokote covered aircraft – it does not scratch the covering off the plane.
- Friendly to fiberglass aircraft – cowlings don't scratch if nosed-over.
- It doesn't require mowing, reseeding, fertilizing or watering.
- It is “instant”. You can fly off of it as soon as it is staked down.
- It is long lasting, resilient, and easily repaired.
- Tough surface
- Simple to install
- Reduces damage to landing gear & cost of repairs to modelers
- Highly visible & does not disappear into the grass like paint or chalk would
- Provides target for pilots & students to aim for on landing approach
- Encourages proper takeoff & landing technique
- Increased membership with smaller electric model owners able to use the field.
- Increased variation in models which need smooth surface for takeoff & landings
- Very strong, material not affected by foot traffic in any season.
- All weather resistant, animal & critter resistant

In addition to being cost-effective and adaptable, the Geotextile is tough enough to withstand prop damage from a plane over-rotating or tipping over. In rare cases where damage does occur, the Geotextile can be easily repaired.”

I have requested a sample of Geotextile from USFabrics, so that members can examine it. It's not the same as the conveyor or drier belt that some members have experienced.

In conclusion, my wife and I have made many friends at TCRCM that we don't want to lose. Having said that, the main reason I go to the field is to fly the types of airplanes that I enjoy flying. If I can't fly what I want to fly there, then I will have to consider that in my future decisions. For those that have airplanes that work off the grass and aren't considering any other types of airplanes in the future, please consider the future of the club. It's time to upgrade the field to be able to use the modern variety of aircraft that either don't work well off grass or don't work all!