

Monday, May 26, 2008

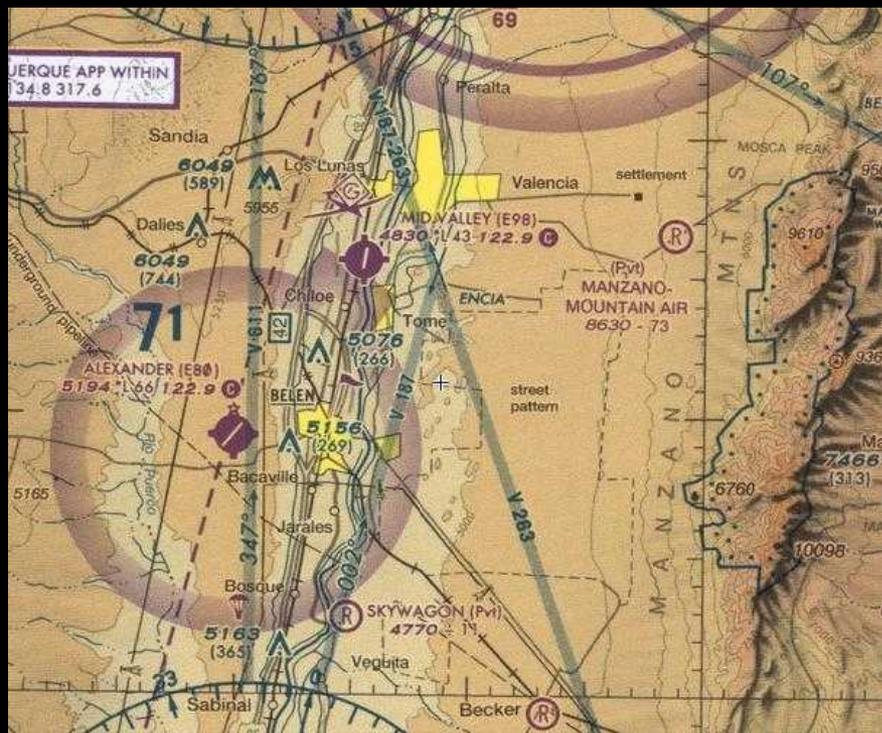
205<sup>th</sup> Cobra flight, 216thPIC, 6 landings

Valley of no horses, Caldron, NM89, Triego, Bosque

Takeoff: 6:35 am Landing: 9:28 am

Today's Airtime: 2.9 hrs GPS odometer: 145 miles

Total PIC Time : 520.4 Total Logged Time 541.6



I pulled up skyvector.com and looked at the sectional map around Belen this week and noticed something new. Manzano-Mountain Air, a private airstrip at the base of the Manzano Mountains. A little more searching revealed the airport identifier, NM89.

I have stayed clear of the Manzanos because a TFR placed over the mountains while a forest fire was raging out of control all spring. Huge helicopters based out of Belen were dumping water on the fire. About 2 weeks ago the fire was put out by a freak May snowstorm and the TFR was lifted.

I wanted to see check out the fire, and while I was over there, swing by NM89 to see what was going on over there.

I drove down early and was in the a half hour after sunrise at 6:35 am. A predawn flight this time of year will require a painful 3am wake time.

It was windy at 6:30, blowing 20mph 500ft AGL and crossing the runway at about a 30 deg angle. I did a 5 touch and goes for practice and headed west toward the Valley of the Horses.





The winds and bumps kept me from zooming along at cholla cactus height over the flatlands. I saw this interesting pool on a desert stream. It looked permanent and deep.

I stayed low and flew in the wind shadow at the base of the Sierra Lucero ridgeline. It was calm down here, but I could not relax as it was blowing 25 above. There were no horses this morning, and I flew over the mesas that create the "Jaws of Death" and head east towards NM89 and the Manzanos.

Lower right: Jaws of Death

Lower left: South bowl of the Caldron



The Rio Grande was full of water and the Bosque was very green.

I continued east following my GPS to NN89. I found it about a quarter mile south of the coordinates I pulled off of airnav.com



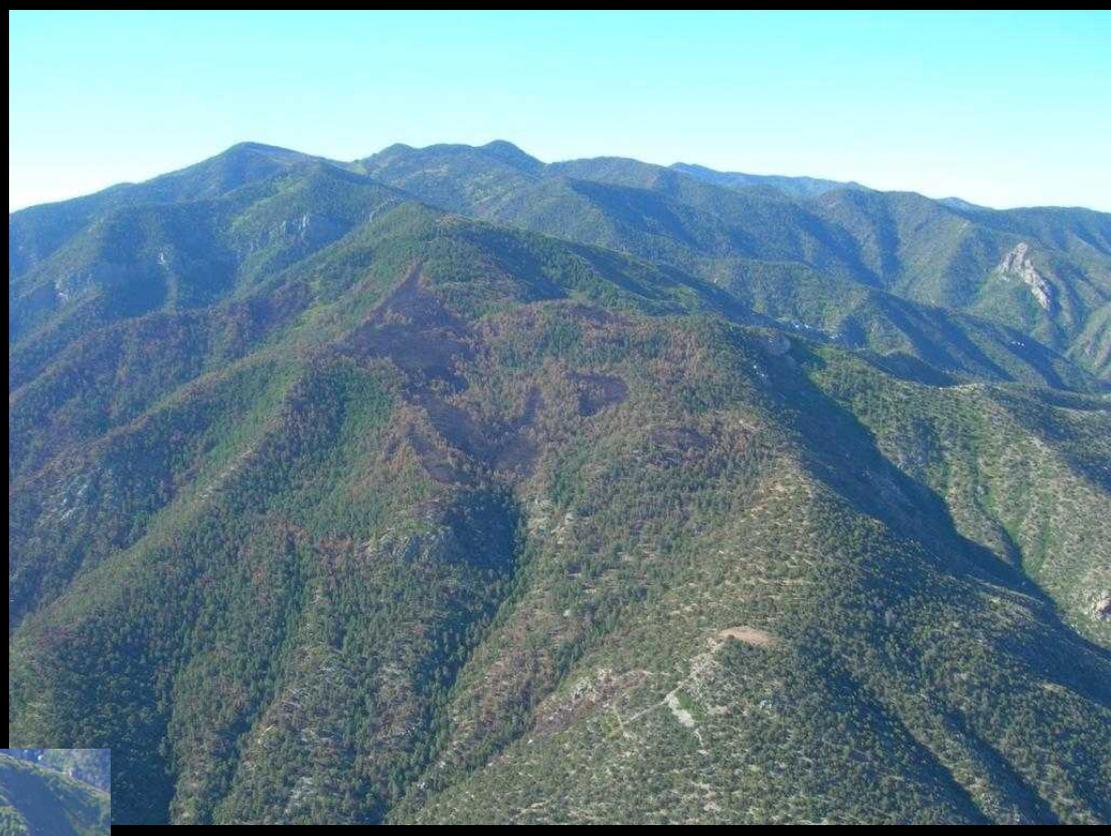
I don't understand the purpose of this runway. There is absolutely nothing out here. The tear drop is a turnaround at the SW end of the runway. At the opposite end is a large circular clearing.

I'll come back when it is calm an smooth and get a close look at the runway, but I don't think I'll be landing here.

I found where the Triego Fire wreaked havoc last month. The fire started on this side of the mountain and then crossed over the top and burned for a month. The TFR has been lifted so I went in close to see the damage. It was not as bad as I expected, but most of the damage was on the other side.

The 25 mph wind kept me on the upwind side today. I'll take another look on a calm wind day later this summer.

I crossed back over the farms near Belen and landed. The winds were blowing 25 crossing at a 45 deg angle. I got popped by a thermal and landed long but gently.



Here is my GPS track of this fun little flight.

