

USHGA Name Change Committee  
By Tad Hurst

In March of 2004, a request was brought before the USHGA Board of Directors to consider changing the name of the organization to reflect the growing influence and importance of paragliding. Our organization currently has more members that fly only hang gliders than those who fly only paragliders, but that majority is shrinking. The group that is increasing most quickly is the group of pilots that fly both paragliders and hang gliders.

Based on this request, I have been assigned to chair USHGA's Name Change committee. The committee is tasked with oversight of the procedures for ascertaining if a change in the name is supported by the USHGA membership, and the process to affect that change if it is supported.

I am a pilot that flies both hang gliders and paragliders, and I am one of the Region 3 directors of USHGA. I have not expressed an opinion on the issue of changing the name. My primary purpose in this matter is to ensure that the process is conducted in a fair manner.

There are many who feel strongly on both sides of this issue. A recent poll on the USHGA Web site was quite revealing in this matter. Although that poll was seriously flawed in its organization, it did show clearly that nearly half of the respondents did not want the name to change, while slightly more than half favored a change to a name that better reflects the total membership. Because of the organization of that poll, it is not possible to determine if the respondents favored the change to any particular name.

USHGA should not ignore the fact that a large contingent of members wants the name to change, nor should it take action to affect a name change that is not clearly supported by a majority of the membership. Based on this, the USHGA Board of Directors approved a process for the name change initiative at the October 2004 meeting in Boise, Idaho. This process is designed to ensure that the name is either changed or not changed according to the documented wishes of the majority of the membership.

There are two particular procedures that would be patently unfair, and were not considered:

- 1) First vote to change the name, then select the new name. This procedure *could* result in the name being changed to one that is less popular than the current name.
- 2) Put all possible names in a single pool along with the current name, and take the most popular. This method ignores that fact that more than half of the poll respondents wanted the name changed to something that included all flight disciplines, and assumes that those who favored the lower choices in the poll would not support the most popular alternate name.

Other concerns about the previous poll include the observation that those who were opposed to changing the name could not influence the choice of the new name. I have heard from many members who are generally opposed to changing the name, but who definitely would be more supportive of one of the potential new names over the other choices. Another concern, that was also expressed regarding the recent vote on powered harnesses, was that there was not sufficient time allotted to allow publishing both pro and con viewpoints in the magazine prior to the official ballot.

Our approach to the question of name change will be done intentionally over a longer period of time. This period will allow for proper debate. Articles will be submitted and published in the USHGA magazine supporting both sides of the issue. The longer time frame is also consistent with the feeling that a change of name is an important, serious matter, and is not to be taken lightly or quickly.

Here is the procedure adopted by the USHGA Board of Directors on the recommendation of the Name Change committee. The committee included members who were in favor of the change and those were opposed to any name change. All members worked together to outline a procedure that was generally considered fair.

Procedure:

- 1) Create pro and con discussion groups on the Web. The purpose of each of these groups will be to appoint a representative or ad-hoc subcommittee. That committee will have one and only one assigned task: to produce the two position letters to be presented with the eventual ballot. These committees may also choose to promote their particular view in various ways. The committee chairpersons are expected to submit articles to the USHGA magazine.

These groups have been created, and can be found at:

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/USHGA\\_KEEP\\_NAME/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/USHGA_KEEP_NAME/)

and

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/USHGA\\_CHANGE\\_NAME/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/USHGA_CHANGE_NAME/)

These groups are not intended for debate on the name change. Debate will occur in other Internet discussion groups, in the magazine, and at every flying site that USHGA members use.

- 2) POLL for the new name candidate. The choices on the poll will be the top three from the previous poll:
  - a) United States Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association
  - b) United States Free Flight Association
  - c) United States Foot Launched Association

USHGA is NOT a candidate for this poll, but will be RESERVED for the final poll and vote. This poll will be conducted on the USHGA Web site, and by

phone, fax, or email to me (Tad Hurst – [thurst@chemnavigator.com](mailto:thurst@chemnavigator.com)).

To participate in the poll, use one of the following methods:

- a) Visit <http://www.ushga.org> on the Web.
- b) Email Tad Hurst at [thurst@chemnavigator.com](mailto:thurst@chemnavigator.com) with your choice (one of the three above). The subject of the message must be “Name Change Poll.” You must include your USHGA number and your full name.
- c) Call Tad Hurst at (858) 450-9740, ext. 1266. This is my office number. If you leave a message, you must indicate your full name, USHGA number, and your choice for the new name candidate. I will not return calls that have insufficient information.
- d) Mail the poll form from this magazine to:

Tad Hurst  
11969 Oakview Way  
San Diego, CA 92128

Attn: Name Change Poll

NOTE: if you respond to the poll more than once on the Web page, each response erases the previous response. If you respond by multiple methods, the Web responses will override the others. I may spot-check some of the respondents to assure that there is not abuse of the system.

If this poll is not close, we will skip step 3 and go straight to step 4.

3) Hold an official vote on the PROPOSED new name. Only the top two choices of the poll results will be included as possibilities. This is NOT a vote to change the name from USHGA to a new name, but to choose the new candidate name. Those who oppose the change of the name may vote for the least objectionable name, then later vote against the chosen name.

4) POLL to see how many members would vote to change the name from USHGA to the new name candidate. If this poll does not show strong support for the name change (at least 50% of the responses in favor), the move will die. As before, the poll will be conducted on the USHGA Web site, by phone, fax or email to me, Tad Hurst. Details of the poll mechanism will be published in the USHGA magazine.

5) Official vote with the two position letters as approved by the pro and con committees. The wording of this ballot will be approved for administrative and legal correctness before the vote is taken.

It is this final step that ensures the fairness of the procedure. If more than half of the members vote to change the name, then it will be changed. If more than half vote to retain the current name, then it will not be changed.

It is my general feeling that this procedure is slightly biased against making a name change, and I do not apologize for this. The proponents of a name change will have to succeed in passing the preliminary poll (step 4) and win the actual vote (step 5). It is my feeling that an organizational name change is an important step, and should be taken only if strong support can be demonstrated.

The time frame for the procedure follows:

October 2004: BOD approved the procedure

October-March 2004: Poll for new name choices

April-June, 2005: Official vote on new name choice if needed

June-October, 2005: Poll on change of name from USHGA to new name candidate

January 2006: Vote on change from USHGA to new name. Vote will end by February 28, 2006.

This is an important issue for USHGA members. In the end, one of the two large groups of members will lose. It is my goal and hope that reasonable members of the losing group will consider the process to have been fair. Please remember that, although we may disagree on what the name of the organization should be, we must all work together to preserve our sport for years to come.

Dr. Tad Hurst  
Region 3 Director  
USHGA