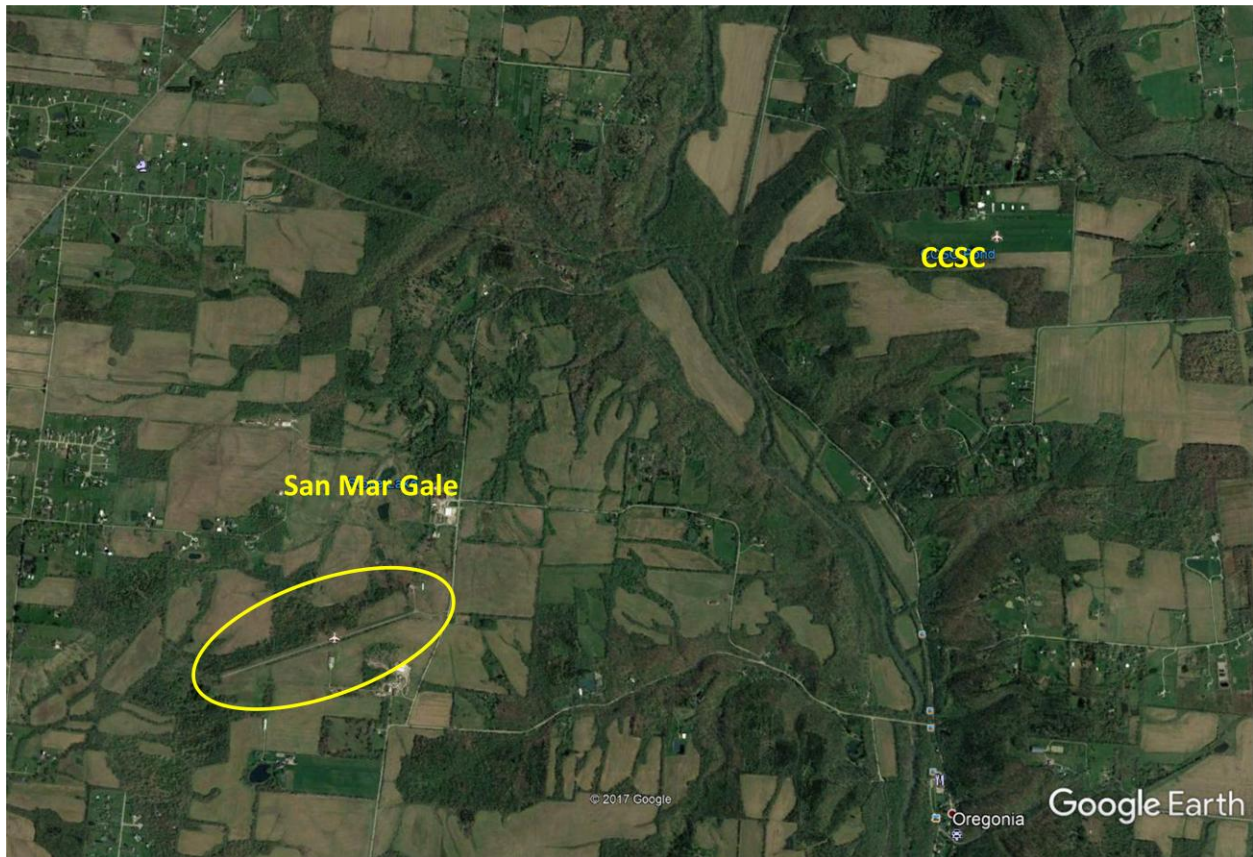


I wouldn't land there...except...

Kevin Price, CCSC Safety Officer
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When I began flying gliders at CCSC I often looked around (and still do) for where I could land in case I couldn't make it back to the field. I noticed the closed San Mar Gale runway located about 2 nautical miles southwest from CCSC and wondered if it was an option. Here is a map of the runway's location:



I went over to the field a couple of years ago and also again recently to survey it. I drove the runway's full length of just over 3000 feet and found its surface to still be decent and generally free of obstacles. However, grass, weeds, and brush growth along the runway's narrow 30' width clearly rule it out as an option for low winged aircraft, especially ones with large wingspans such as gliders. Here are a couple of pictures looking to the southwest showing the growth, one with my car in the foreground to provide a perspective on the runway's width:

Southwest



Southwest



Clearly this runway is not an option for a low winged glider. That said, a high winged aircraft such as 2-33, Piper Cub, Champ, etc may be able to land there safely. A low winged aircraft that has wings well above the ground and/or that bow up, e.g., a Pawnee may also be able to land there safely. I personally would not rule this closed runway out in those type of aircraft if faced with a forced landing situation.

My purpose in writing this article is so our low-winged glider pilots will not consider this field as an option. While this is perhaps already known by long term club members, newcomers may not be aware.

Note: If you land there, be aware that the owner may react very unfavorably (as at least one club member can attest to from personal experience). Of course, in a real emergency the owner's reaction really wouldn't matter. However, do not look upon this closed runway as a normal option for landing in case your planning and/or in flight decisions don't work out. The owner's likely ire and the potential for obstacles to find their way onto the runway underscore that this closed runway is for emergencies only...and even then just for aircraft with wings well above the ground.