

Event: First Solo Glider Flight, Landing in Corn Field. (See flight path on 2 pdfs of Google map)

Date: Sunday, July 10, 2022

Time of landing: Approximately 7:15 pm

Glider: Schweizer SGS 2-33 N3616Q

We took off to the east from Caesar Creek Soaring Club grass runway 9 (20H9, elevation 940 MSL), turned south to stay over farm fields avoiding trees, then turned north, climbing eastward to the dam at Caesar Creek State Park. When reaching 2940 MSL (2000 AGL), I released from the Piper tow plane and turned right 180 degrees away from the tow plane. I could see the glare of the sun reflecting off Gard Road pavement, which was slightly to my right, and travelled ahead down to the downwind entry leg for 20H9. At this point I was parallel to the road. I was looking for the airfield but could not see it because of the glare from the sun. I still could not see it as I crossed the power lines, which are about half the distance to 20H9. As I continued, I could see the I-71 bridge over the Little Miami River slightly ahead and about 4 miles to my left. Waynesville looked to be 3 miles to my right. I keep checking both as I continued, and it appeared that I was on the correct path. When I reached 2100 MSL, I estimated that I was over the airfield, but I could not see it due to the sun. I called on the radio and asked if anyone could see me. No answer. Thoughts of accidentally crashing the glider at the beginning of youth camp when it would be needed caused anxiety. I would be a bad example. Underneath were trees and residential lots. I recovered and was determined to find a place to land safely. Ahead I saw the Little Miami River Valley and I thought that I was south of the pattern area for 20H9. I turned right heading north expecting to see the airport on my right. I called on the radio saying that I could see power lines which were on my right. Below me to my left and on the other side of the river was a Piper Cherokee heading the same direction to Red Stewart Field (40i). I could see RT 42 where it goes from 4 lanes to 2 at Red Stewart, but I could not see the grass strip due to the glare of the sun. I judged that probably I could not glide that far, and it was too risky. Ahead I could see 3 fields in line ahead of me slightly to my left. The first one was long enough but had high corn. I had heard of two events landing in tall corn. In one, the glider was totaled and in the other, a passenger was injured. The second field looked too short, and in the 3rd field, the corn was short, and it looked long enough for a safe landing without damage to the glider, the field, or getting injured. I was at about 1200 MSL as I turned left base from downwind. I was sufficiently NE of RT73. Now I did another shallow left turn (18 deg) for a level straight approach across the trees along RT73. I was at 50 to 55 mph and did not want to stall or clip the trees that surrounded the field. I estimate that I was 50 to 100 feet about the trees on final. As I crossed the trees, I put in a slip until I got close to the corn. I had cut across the field on a slight diagonal to extend the distance and now I shallow banked to the right to be parallel to the trees on my left which bordered Corwin Rd. As I got close to the end of the field, there was a slightly rising driveway in front of me. In front of me were trees with brush blocking the view of the trunks. The thought of hitting a tree trunk dead center frightened me. I may have pulled up a bit to get more induced drag to slow and settle to the earth. With an instructor in the back seat, the aft stick travel was limited, and the glider would mush in slow flight and not stall. The glider stopped and pivoted 180 degrees, facing the direction from which I had just come. I noticed damage under the rudder pedals in the front cockpit, where I was sitting. I got out and shut the canopy. Then I noticed that the right wing was damaged. I had not hit any tree. I was not injured, and I did not see any damage to the corn. There was a bicyclist a few feet away at the top of the driveway. My cell phone was at the airport. He repeatedly tried calling Caesar Creek Soaring Club. Also, we called my cell phone hoping that someone would answer. We never called 911 since it did not seem to be an emergency. The life squad arrived 10-15 minutes later and took my blood pressure. Everything was ok. Sheriff came next. Members of the Club came. Then the Ohio State came and took my information and my statement of the event. He gave his permission to remove the glider. About 8:30 pm I was given a ride back to the airport. A few days later, I was looking at my cell phone log and noticed that at 7:14 pm on the day of the event, one of the Club members at the field called to ask if I was ok and where was I located. The Club members at 20H9 had heard my radio calls and tried to respond to my calls. I had turned on the avionics switch during preflight but had not attempted a radio check. Volume was probably low. We had not yet gotten used to using the recently installed radios in the gliders. Tow pilots used their radios to communicate with ground operations. Based on the time of the call, I estimate that I landed around 7:15 pm. Since I released at 2000 AGL, I estimate my flight time to be 12-14 minutes.

No advanced planning

I had not set the alarm and had slept well. I had no definite schedule. I went to EAA chapter 974 2 pm monthly meeting at Butler County Airport. Usually, Billy Bie has a FAA Wings discussion on safety for a subject that is available from the EAA. Since Billy was not there and the meeting ended early, I drove to Caesar Creek arriving before 5 pm. I wanted chat with the crew since I used to volunteer with them. I thought that I might find out what was going on for the week since youth camp had just started. Also, I was curious to see if there might be an opportunity to fly during the week. Since I hoped to go dancing that evening, I did not think that there was enough time to go gliding. Nor did I think that there would be a tow pilot or instructor available. Since I was killing time, I asked the crew sitting at the picnic table to correct me if I was wrong as I verbally reviewed the glider to tow plane signals such as rocking the wings and wagging the rudder. Also went through the landing checklist. An instructor pilot comes over and says that I could get checked out to do a couple of solo flights. Since I had never talked to anyone about soloing, I assumed that it would be like my first solo 45 years earlier, where you stay in the pattern and do 3 takeoffs and landings.

I did a preflight inspection on N3616Q, a Schweizer SGS233 and found nothing wrong. So, I went up with Tom Rudolf first. During the climb to 3940 MSL (3000 AGL), I did a box the wake to the right, a couple of slack line exercises and a soft release at Caesar Creek dam. Then we did slow flight, attempted stalls, but the glider just mushed. The aft stick travel was limited by the waist of the instructor in the back. We accelerated to 50 mph and did a number of stalls with clean break and smooth recovery. Then did steep turns both directions. I managed to hit the requested numbers on speed and maintain them through the maneuvers and keep the string centered, thus demonstrating coordinated flight. After landing, the crew at the picnic table at the west end of the runway, remarked how good my base and final approach over the trees looked. I added the slip as I cleared the trees to increase the descent and land near the first cone marker as Tom had requested. Since I had not planned to fly, I walked back to my car parked mid field and got my logbook. Tom filled out remarks and included OK to solo SGS-233 at 20H9. Then I went up with Jim Goebel, the second instructor. I did box the wake twice, first to the right and then to the left. I released again at the dam at 3000 AGL. We did turns, straight flight, found some lift and circled to the right maintaining altitude. Then I suggested circling left to find better lift. I circled a couple of times, but the lift was only sufficient to maintain altitude. Jim suggested that I dive and accelerate to 80 mph before we crossed mid field, then turn right to enter downwind for a righthand pattern for runway 9. We landed and Jim filled out my logout including OK to solo today.

As I was filling out the card to give to the tow pilot, I was told that we would be only climbing to 2000 AGL and releasing by the dam. I was somewhat surprised because most of my flights were 3000 AGL practicing maneuvers, 1000 AGL practicing pattern work and landings, or 200-250 AGL developing proficiency at the steep turn and maintaining 55 mph to return to airport safely after simulated tow rope break. Although I was told that I should be able to do a couple of turns to get the feel of the glider at the lighter weight, I don't remember acknowledging. I questioned Tom about the 2000 AGL. He said that that is what we do on solo flight.

There was plenty of time to sit and relax in the glider, but the unknown sort of bothered me. In the Cessna, I planned for high altitudes. I gain more time and significantly more area with each additional 1000 feet. I was used to flying single engine aircraft around 6000 MSL for more safety in my opinion. Finally, it was time to go. I probably did first check ride around 6 pm. And the second one half hour later. I did not think about the movement of the sun as it settled and moved further north. It was not a problem on the check rides.

My reason for learning gliding

I took a guest ride on September 4, 2019. During the ride I realized that there were a lot of things to learn in gliding that would help me to be a safer pilot, and that I should know for emergencies in powered aircraft. I started my training on September 25, 2019.

Things to consider

- Release at higher altitude
- If radio is installed, establish communication with tow plane and/or ground crew if possible

- Just prior to first solo, fly similar flight profile with instructor as expected in the solo flight and in similar wind and lighting conditions if possible
- Just prior to first solo, on ground in area with few distractions, review anticipated flight with both instructors. Acknowledge by repeating back to the instructors the plan and the options available in flight for landing.
- Discuss potential flexibility of the flight. Is there the possibility of traffic in the pattern? Is field operations on hold? Is a straight in downwind landing acceptable? Do you have enough altitude to circle and look around? What to do if sun impairs vision? As it gets closer to sunset, the sun is moving lower to the horizon more quickly and moving to the north more quickly. Shadows are different than a flight taken just a short time ago. Take a card to use as a sun visor?
- If available, take a casual flight in a powered aircraft over the surrounding area to review the sightline of the approach to the runway from both sides. Do trees hide the field or the hangers? Do familiar landmarks look different from new sightline? Are there other landmarks that you may have not noticed on previous flights that may help you identify more precisely your location? On Thursday after the event, I got a ride to observe 20H9 from the north side. The trees block the view of the field and hangers. I think that there are fewer landmarks close to the field on the north side. Caesar Creek Gorge and the State Nature Preserve is mostly wooded,

Other information useful for planning before arriving at the airport

- Review Google satellite maps to assist in viewing the big picture and reviewing landmarks from the prior instruction flights. TAC charts probably do not supply sufficient detail.
- If available, practice flight plan in simulator.

Getting back into flying

My medical exam was 10/23/2020. I did not receive the certificate until around Thanksgiving 2021 due COVID manpower limitations and additional brain MRI examinations to verify that I did not have cancer. I took lessons with Billy Bie at Butler County Airport and got my BFR on 4 JAN 2022. I chose Billy, because he agreed to good preflight briefings and open discussions. Sometimes we did not fly, because I keep asking questions and wanted to learn to be a safe pilot. I never felt rushed and felt free to make suggestions for safer flight. Also, we had a plan for the things that we wanted to cover. He suggested the FAA WINGS safety program and I learned a lot and still have a lot to learn.

This glider event reminded me that even though I am a student glider pilot, when flying solo, I am the pilot responsible for safe flight. Once moving, I am alone and can not hope that assistance may be available. I won't go if something bothers me.

Logbook time	90 days	6 months	1 year	Total hour
• Glider	3.5 hrs	3.5 hrs	7.5 hrs	27.6 hrs
• Single engine land	6.4 hrs	14.0 hrs	32.0 hrs	542.7 hrs
• Total	9.9 hrs	17.5 hrs	39.5 hrs	570.3 hrs

Valentine R Boehm, Jr.

Pilot Certificate number

July 21, 2022

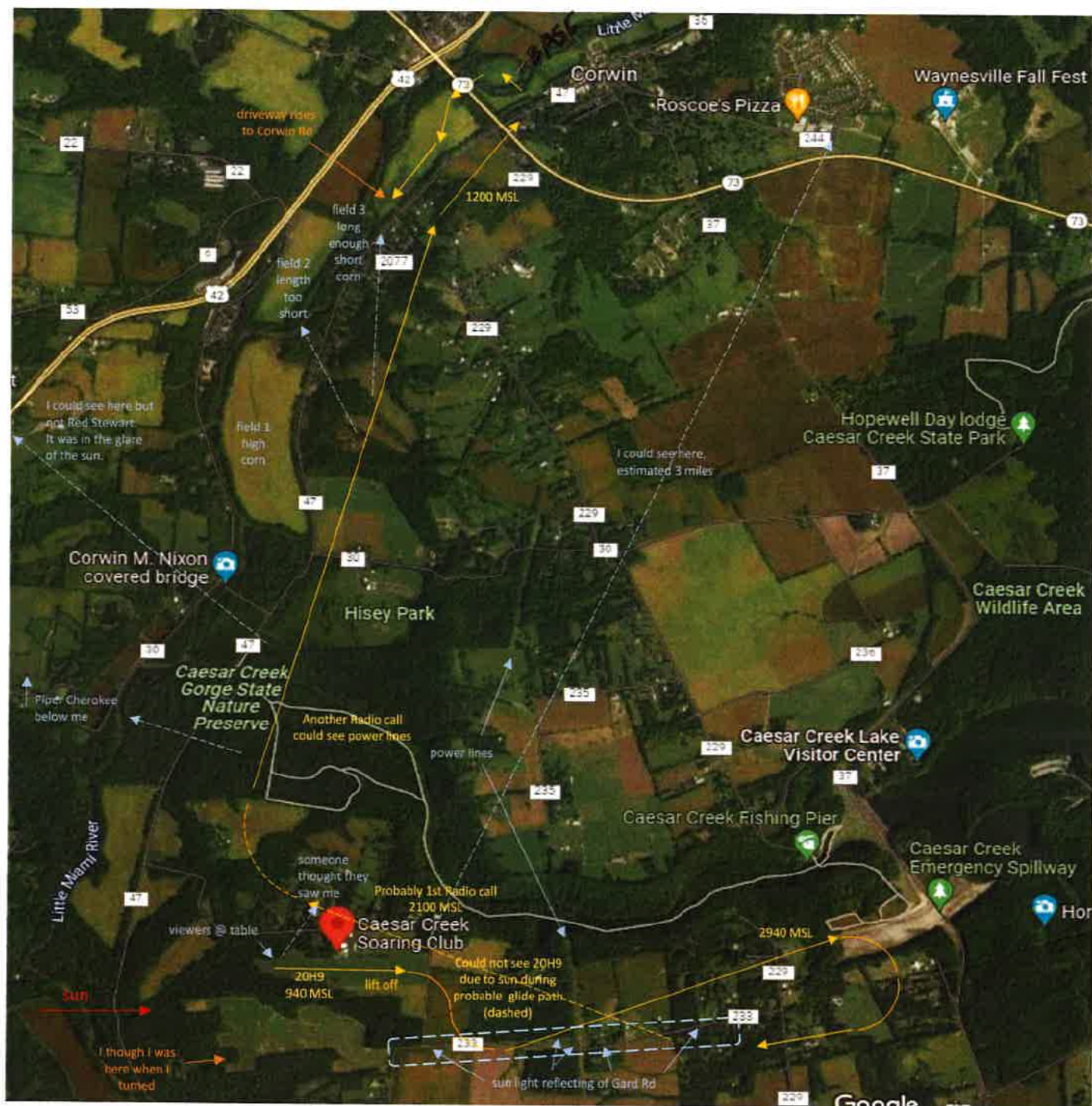


Figure 20H9 Route of flight, Take off to the Landing

Waynesville Ohio

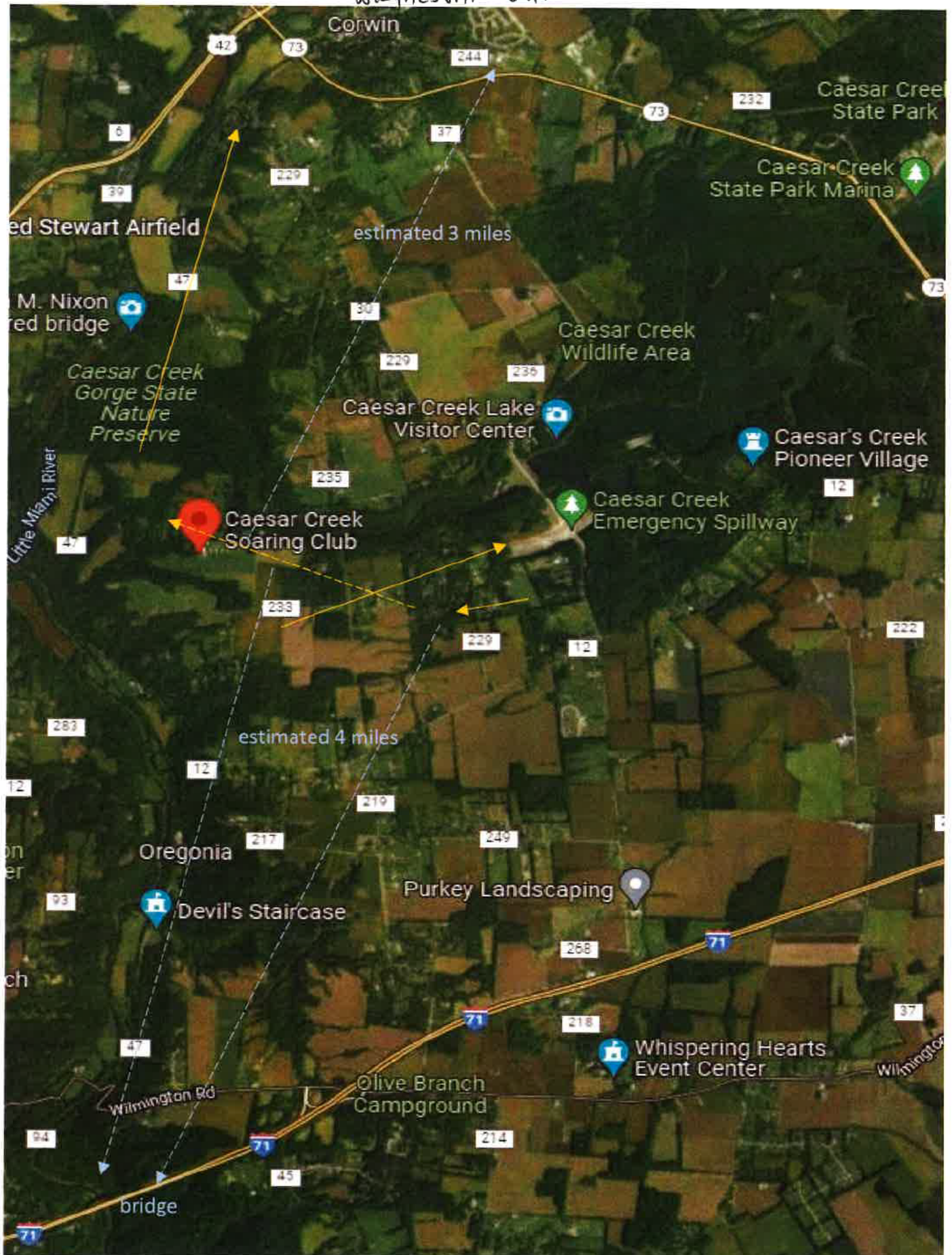


Figure 2049-1, Distances to bridge on I-71 and to South Side of Waynesville
Estimated