

MARSHALL STAR

Green Flight Challenge Awards \$1.35 Million to Team Pipistrel

By Janet Anderson

NASA has awarded the largest prize in aviation history, created to inspire the development of more fuel-efficient aircraft and spark the start of a new electric airplane industry. The technologies demonstrated by competitors in the CAFE Green Flight Challenge, sponsored by Google, may end up in general aviation aircraft -- spawning new jobs and new industries for the 21st century.

Image right: Pipistrel-USA team lead Jack Langelan shows off the winning aircraft, the Taurus G4, on Oct. 3 at NASA's Ames Research Center. The all-electric airplane achieved the equivalency of more than 400 miles per gallon. (NASA/Bill Ingalls)



The first-place prize of \$1.35 million was awarded to team Pipistrel-USA.com of State College, Pa. The second-place prize of \$120,000 went to team eGenius of Ramona, Calif.

NASA's Centennial Challenges promote technical innovation through a novel program of prize competitions. The challenges are designed to tap the nation's ingenuity to make revolutionary advances in technology of value to NASA and the nation.

NASA's Office of the Chief Technologist in Washington and the Marshall Space Flight Center manage the prize program. The competition was managed by the Comparative Aircraft Flight Efficiency, or CAFE, Foundation under an agreement with NASA.

Fourteen teams originally registered for the competition. Three teams successfully met all requirements and competed Sept. 26-29 in the skies over the Charles M. Schulz Sonoma County Airport in Santa Rosa, Calif.

"NASA congratulates Pipistrel-USA.com for proving that ultra-efficient aviation is within our grasp," said Joe Parrish, NASA's acting chief technologist at NASA Headquarters in Washington. "Today we've shown that electric aircraft have moved beyond science fiction and are now in the realm of practice."

The winning aircraft had to fly 200 miles in less than two hours and use less than one gallon of fuel per occupant, or the equivalent in electricity. The first- and second-place aircraft, which were both electric-powered, achieved twice the fuel efficiency requirement of the competition, meaning they flew 200 miles using just over a half-gallon of fuel equivalent per passenger.

"Basically we are trying to make a Prius fly," said Sam Ortega, Centennial Challenges program manager.

This week's competition marks the culmination of more than two years of aircraft design, development and testing for the teams. It represents the dawn of a new era in efficient flight and is the first time that full-scale electric aircraft have performed in competition. Collectively, the competing teams invested more than \$4 million in pursuit of the challenge prize purse.

Learn more about NASA's Centennial Challenges a [here](#).

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