

Burt Rutan Takes SkiGull to the Water

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Burt Rutan has started testing his latest airplane design, the SkiGull, an amphibious design he says will be his last. This week, the legendary airplane designer took the airplane to Hayden Lake for some early water testing. The fuselage was launched into the water before the wings were attached and Rutan briefed test pilot Glenn Smith on what water-taxi maneuvers to perform.

Rutan then observed the test from a boat. The testing showed that the SkiGull's design needed some tweaking, as the pitch angles at low speeds were not ideal. Rutan says he will now make modifications to improve the pitch angles and divulged that seaplane designs are "more difficult to perfect than airplane designs."



Photo supplied by Burt Rutan



***SkiGull in the HoneyBadger Hangar at KCOE, still on its road transport wheels and trailer hitch.
(Photo supplied by Burt Rutan)***

The SkiGull is designed with a retractable, flexible ski system, which provides five times the shock absorption deflection of a typical landplane allowing the airplane to operate in rough water, even beach waves, Rutan said. The system will be pneumatically deployed during water takeoffs at 18 knots and deactivated at 12 knots during landing.

Rutan said the amphibious airplane will likely rarely go to an airport since it uses car and boat fuel and can be stored in a single garage. It is designed to resist corrosion, even in saltwater, and will have a docking system using two 12 hp electric motors driving a folding propeller. In addition to providing the capability of maneuvering the airplane on the water